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HORÆ APOSTOLICÆ.

HORÆ APOSTOLICÆ;

OR, A

Digested Narrative

OF THE

ACTS AND WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLES
OF JESUS CHRIST.

George
ARRANGED ACCORDING TO TOWNSEND,

BY

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PREFACE.

THE object of this little work is to present, in regular and plain succession, a digested narrative of the Acts and Writings of the Apostles, in order that the Christian reader may be better enabled to understand the pains and labours of the first messengers of the Gospel of Peace, and thereby more rightly estimate the loving-kindness and faithfulness of Him who sent them forth as His ambassadors to bear the knowledge of His name into all nations.

It is hoped that the attempt may be found useful, as well to the younger members of the Christian Church as to those more aged ones, who have not the means nor

ability to search more minutely into the various bearings of the Revealed Word of God, in reference to the ministration of His Apostles, and the building up of His Most Holy Church.

In this hope it is now sent forth, with earnest prayer to the Divine Head of the Christian Heritage that His blessing may be upon it, to the edifying of His people and to the glory of His name, besides which “there is none other under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”

Margaret Roding, Essex,

May 29, 1846.

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HORÆ APOSTOLICÆ ;

OR,

A DIGESTED NARRATIVE OF THE ACTS AND
WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLES.



INTRODUCTION.

A.D. 29.

ACTS I.

Mount Olivet.—The Apostles enter upon their Ministerial Office, by the appointment of Matthias to succeed Judas Iscariot.

THE history of the Acts of the Apostles necessarily commences with the receiving of their last commission on Mount Olivet, on the occasion of the final departure of their Master from them by his visible ascension into heaven. Up to that period they might be considered as acting under his immediate personal inspection and guidance. Now, they found themselves left as orphans, according to their Master's prediction just before his betrayal and death. He who had for more than two years

been their guide and friend, who had ministered to their wants, and shewn them the way of God in truth, was now entirely removed from their society. They had beheld him taken up into heaven. A cloud had received him out of their sight. He was no longer present with them in his bodily form. His voice no longer appealed to them with heavenly wisdom, filling their hearts with joy and gladness. His hands were no longer lifted up in their behalf. His steps no longer went about doing good. They had followed his steps in the deserts of Judea, accompanied him in thronging cities, slept under his protection on the tossing billows, shared in his passing day of unparalleled triumph in his progress from Bethany to the Temple, heard his last warning instruction beneath the midnight sky, and seen him die as a malefactor whilst he exercised the prerogative of God. They had, too, bewailed his death; and hopeless, disconcerted, unmanned, they had viewed the sealed sepulchre. That sepulchre they had next seen, with consternation and surprise, untenanted; and they had heard, with astonished awe and reverence, angelic voices proclaim the Resurrection. Slowly and painfully their incredulity had been removed, whilst conviction reluctantly came that "He was not there, but risen." For forty days on various occasions, during the in-

terval between his resurrection and ascension, he had manifested himself to the incredulous Disciples, bearing all the identity of the cross on his risen body. That interval he had employed in soothing their fears, awakening their hopes, renewing their commission, and suggesting to them loftier apprehensions of their future usefulness and paramount services.

When all this had been accomplished, and the scattered fugitives were again collected, and rightly impressed with the nature of their high calling, so that they had re-united their society, and were leagued together in one compact company, then was their Master removed from earth and taken up into heaven. Their eyes beheld his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He, who had been a wanderer in his weary and painful pilgrimage of life, not knowing where to lay his head,—he, who had been the aim and mark of malice in high places, and of scorn and derision amongst the refuse of the people,—he, against whom both Jew and Gentile had conspired with deadly fury, to be satiated only by blood,—he, who had been condemned as an outcast of society, and who had died the death of the vilest slave, in the company of thieves and murderers,—he had been carried up to heaven. The angelic hosts had met

him with the homage of the skies, and his faithful earthly followers had worshipped him with a holy worship. He had returned to the glory which he had with his Father before the world began, and two of the Divine persons of the Holy Trinity had announced to them the encouraging truth, that their ascended Lord should hereafter return with the same glory as that which encompassed him in his going up into heaven. All these events so far removed from the machinery of earthly contrivance, and so identified with the Divine character of Him who had chosen them for his friends and ministers, filled them with devout joy ; new lights burst upon their understandings ; their darkened ignorance was rolled away ; glorious prospects arose before them, and revealed to them the performance of duties, difficult indeed, and hazardous in their execution, but unspeakably glorious to themselves, and incalculably beneficial to others. So that when they turned away from the place which had been the scene of their Master's ascension, to return to Jerusalem according to his direction, their hearts were no longer disconsolate for his loss, but rather filled with an apprehension of his heavenly lessons, and animated with the conviction that, though gone, he would be, according to his promise, "present with them, even unto the end of the world."

It is impossible for us to enter fully into the various and diversified thoughts which occupied the devoted attention of the Eleven as they returned from Olivet to Jerusalem. Olivet had been the scene of some important passages in the life and teaching of their Master, especially just before his death. It had been foretold by Zechariah (xiv.) that "the feet of the Lord should stand upon the Mount of Olives," in the day when "living waters should go out from Jerusalem." That anticipation of prophecy was fulfilled when, from the summit of the Mount of Olives, Jesus descended to enter into the city in that triumphal progress, to which the history of nations and individuals affords no parallel. On the Mount of Olives he sat when he warned his Disciples, in language of the most awful description, of the fearful signs which should precede the desolation of Jerusalem, and the end of all things prefigured in that desolation. The Mount of Olives was the place to which he resorted after the institution and first celebration of the Christian Passover, immediately before his betrayal by Judas; and there had he solemnly warned his other Disciples of their faithlessness to him in the approaching hour and power of darkness. Scene, therefore, of heavenly instruction during his life, Olivet witnessed his glorious ascension, and became the

spot which stood to the Disciples an everlasting memorial of the truth of Him in whom they had trusted, and for whose sake they were now prepared to lay down their lives in defence of their faith, and in testimony of his Gospel. The fishermen of Galilee were now about to become, in reality, fishers of men. On them now rested a more than ordinary responsibility. Like children bereft of the fostering care and watchful guidance of a dear, an indulgent, a provident father, and called upon to carry into effect his plans and designs, beset with incalculable difficulties, exposed to almost insurmountable obstacles, alone and unfriended in the world, the Eleven returned from Olivet to Jerusalem seriously bent on the execution of those lofty and important duties, which henceforth demanded their unswerving devotion and most watchful care.

Accordingly we find them, as their first official act, taking measures to supply the deficiency in their number caused by the transgression and death of their late associate Judas. For their Master had appointed that there should be twelve—in accordance, probably, with the number of the heads of the tribes of Jacob—who should be overseers of his spiritual house, and special ambassadors of his Mission of Redemption, to make known his will to all nations, and after having

fulfilled the duties of their appointment, to sit hereafter with him on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Their first act, therefore, was one of a ministerial character, altogether different from anything which they had hitherto been called upon to perform. It was to follow up, in renewing their original number, that method which their Master had established when he called them to be Apostles; and it may well serve as an established model of the appointment of the overseers of the flock of God, to whom, especially, are committed the charge and economy of the Church, "built upon Apostles and Martyrs, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

On this occasion we find St. Peter, in accordance with the energy of his character and the former lively expressions of his zeal, which had obtained for him pre-eminence among them, occupying a prominent position. He, of all the eleven, alone addressed the men and brethren who, to the number of one hundred and twenty, were assembled, and pointed out to them the necessity of selecting a person to be appointed to supply the place of Judas, in all respects fitted for that important office, from his own intimate knowledge of what had taken place in the life and teaching of their Master, and from his companionship with them

during the whole of their past apostolic experience. Out of the one hundred and twenty, two persons were especially recommended to the approval of the eleven for this appointment, Joseph and Matthias.

There are various opinions who these two distinguished disciples were. Joseph, surnamed Barsabas, is supposed by some to be the same as "Jesus, who is called Justus," by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians, and described by him as one of his fellow-workers in preaching the Gospel at Rome; by others he is supposed to be the Joses, enumerated as being one of our Lord's brethren with James, and Jude, and Simon.

The selection was determined by lot, after prayer to their Divine Master by the Apostles; and as that lot fell upon Matthias, he has the distinguished honour of being the first person selected for the ministerial office in the Church of Christ, under the agency of the Apostles, being, as we may conclude from the account given, "an Apostle by the will not of man, but of God." The word Matthias signifies "the gift of God," which has led many to infer, from both names having the same meaning, that he is the Nathaniel who received from the lips of the Saviour the high designation of being called "an Israelite

indeed, in whom is no guile." But be this as it may, he was, by this appointment, numbered with the eleven Apostles, and thus was the original number again completed.

The twelve Apostles, upon whom now rested the charge of building up the Church of God, according to the direction of his Holy Son, Jesus Christ, were these:—Simon, whom his Master designated Peter; James and John, the sons of Zebedee, called also Boanerges, or the sons of thunder; Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, whose name had been Levi; another James, described as the son of Alpheus; Simon Zelotes; Judas or Jude, the brother of James; and Matthias, the successor of Judas Iscariot. These were all appointed to the apostolic office with equal power and authority, and by the labours and preaching of these, under the influence of the Spirit of God, was the Gospel spread and made known unto all lands, as "the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." They are the illustrious few, whose voices were raised on earth to carry the sound of that divine message which angels sang at Bethlehem, through all lands, in order that all who had fallen in Adam might hear and know the means of redemption and grace, by which they regained reconciliation and life in Christ;

so that, as the effect of the fall of man had been universal, the power of the redemption might be co-extensive, and the knowledge of it published throughout the whole world.

It is the object of this narrative to shew how this was effected, and afford in a succinct and digested order the principal proceedings recorded in the New Testament, which evidence the power and influence of their Master upon his chosen followers, who, through evil report and good report, persevered in their holy calling, and followed his steps through life in preaching and manifesting the truth of his Gospel, until they sealed their testimony by all, with one exception, dying the death of martyrs.

CHAPTER II.

A.D. 29.

ACTS II.

Pentecost.—The Descent of the Holy Spirit.—Its Effects.—
The First-Fruits of the Gospel.—Union of the Converts,
and their Place of Assembly.

WHEN Moses led the people of Israel from Egypt, he was directed by Jehovah to conduct them to a certain mountain which he would tell him of, where he should receive that confirmation of his divine appointment which should both allay his own scruples, and prove to his followers the truth and authority of his mission. The place appointed was Sinai, and the time was the fiftieth day after the slaying of the Passover, which was the first day of their flight from Egypt. Sinai, which signifies a bush, called also Horeb, or the Mount of God, is a mountain situated in a desert of that name in Asia, near to the Red Sea, having three lofty summits, on the middlemost and highest of which Jehovah delivered the law to Moses, the memorial of which was kept up year by year continually, by the observance of a feast called “the Feast of Pentecost,” from the

Greek word signifying fifty, because the law was given fifty days after the institution of the Passover. It was called also "the Feast of Weeks," because celebrated seven weeks, or a week of weeks, after the Passover. It was known also as "the Feast of Harvest," because the barley harvest, which commenced at the Passover, was now ended; and "the Day of the First-Fruits," because on that day the Jews were directed to offer a new meat-offering unto the Lord.

As Moses was commanded to wait for the confirmation of his appointment at a given place, so were the Apostles enjoined by their risen Master "to tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until they should be endued with power from on high." This command had been given them about ten days, during which time they had mingled together in holy intercourse, and entered upon their ministerial office by appointing Matthias as successor of Judas Iscariot. Although appointed to teach and to preach a new and more perfect way of holiness, of which the law of Moses was but the type and shadow, they still adhered to the observance of the feasts and other things enjoined by that law. Their Master had been punctual in all things contained therein, that he might fulfil all righteousness; and they had learned to follow his example. The day of Pentecost, therefore,

which was also the first day of the week, now rendered to them peculiarly holy by being the day on which their Master had risen from the dead, was not permitted to dawn, without calling them to the ready observance of those duties which Moses had prescribed for the use of the Israelites.

The Apostles were not the only professors of the doctrine of Christ at that time, nor were they the only persons who were ready to observe the feast of Pentecost, for no less than one hundred and twenty persons, devoted to the crucified Jesus, assembled for that purpose, as they had before for the election of a successor of Judas Iscariot. Their place of assembly was, probably, the house to which the Apostles had resorted on their return from Olivet, and in which they had subsequently taken up their abode, belonging to one of the principal converts, either to Mary the mother of John, or to Simon the leper, or to one of the two members of the Sanhedrim, who, fearing to acknowledge Jesus when living, boldly avowed him when dead, by claiming the honour of his hasty interment—Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

Whilst the one hundred and twenty were there assembled on the first day of the week, commemorating the giving of the old law and testifying

their thanksgiving to the God of harvests by offering the first-fruits of the harvest, and, at the same time, keeping up their new mode of assembling together in remembrance of their Master's resurrection, the first-fruits of the grave, an event took place which ratified the gift of a new and more finished law, being the first-fruits of the Holy Ghost in the effusion of tongues, and the first public conversion of a number of persons to the faith of Jesus, under the ministration of his chosen ambassadors.

The account of this wonderful and important event is brief, but one which fills us with astonishment and awe. What, then, must have been the impression of the assembled congregation of Apostles and Disciples, when they heard on a sudden "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind," bursting through and filling the house where they were assembled? With what reverential awe must their attention have been diverted from that sound to the sight of fiery tongues, descending from heaven and resting on themselves, and not symbolically or figuratively, but actually and in truth, infusing into them new powers, new understandings, new languages? It was the descent of the Holy Spirit of God! It was the fulfilment of their Master's reiterated promise; the realisation of that command, for

the accomplishment of which they were to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high—the baptizing by fire and the Holy Ghost predicted by John the Baptist.

The circumstances which attended this wonderful event harmonize very closely with the holy purposes of the day which they were assembled to observe. At the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, the people were astounded by the sound of thunderings, storm, and tempest; the Disciples of Jesus were amazed with the sudden blast of a rushing mighty wind, “filling all the house where they were sitting.”

The acceptance by God of the first sacrifice in the Jewish Tabernacle near Mount Sinai, more than 1500 years, and at the dedication of the Temple at Jerusalem, more than 1000 years before, had been testified by the descent of fire from heaven. In like manner, this first sacrifice of the offerings of the ministers of the Christian Covenant received the mark of Divine acceptance, by this visible descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of cloven tongues of fire resting upon the temples of their bodies, and inspiring the fleshly tabernacles of their hearts with heavenly power, to fit and prepare them to whom the promise had been given, beyond the calculation of all human means and agency, for that glorious work, the progress of

which has been so abundant to the happiness of man and the glory of God. For, on the day of Pentecost, not only were the first-fruits of the Spirit received by those whom that Spirit was to guide into all truth, but there were reaped also the first-fruits of that harvest of grace, by means of which myriads of immortal souls have been, and will be, gathered into the storehouse of their Heavenly Father.

An account of this wonderful event soon spread through the city, and drew together a large concourse of people, who possibly had heard the sound of the rushing wind. These formed a mixed crowd, consisting not only of the natives of the city, but of Jews and proselytes from various parts of the world, who had come up to Jerusalem for the observance of the feast. And, as on the occasion of the apprehension of Jesus, the strangers had expressed their admiration of him whilst the rabble of the city had cried out, "Crucify him ! crucify him !" so, now, the persons from the provinces appear to have been struck with admiration of what they saw and heard, whilst others, the natives of Judea, endeavoured to turn the miracle into ridicule, and deny the power of tongues by referring it to drunkenness, as the Scribes and Pharisees had ascribed the power of miracles exercised by our Saviour to the agency

of Beelzebub. It appears there were present persons from fifteen different nations and provinces, all speaking languages and dialects varying from one another. They were accordingly greatly astonished when they heard the Apostles, men of mean appearance and with no pretension to literary acquirements, speaking fluently and energetically in their several tongues the surpassingly great and glorious things of God. Unaccustomed to such an exhibition, and impressed with the notion of something being about to happen of more than ordinary importance, they anxiously inquired of one another, "What meaneth this?" Not so the natives of Judea. Unacquainted with the languages in which the twelve Apostles were addressing the different groups around them, and stubborn and self-willed, blind to the blaze of truth, and insensible to the conviction of the power of God, they impiously and derisively said, "These men are full of new wine." But this charge, groundless as it was gross, remained not long unanswered. The inspired Twelve stood up, as if by that attitude to rebut the calumny, by presenting their persons to the scrutiny of the gathered multitude; and Peter, ever foremost in energy and zeal, nobly and fearlessly began to vindicate not only the sobriety of himself and the eleven, but the wonder-working

power of God, which in the scene before them had verified the prediction of the prophet Joel (ii. 28), delivered about seven hundred years before. But not content with this vindication, he proceeded further to prove from the Jewish Scriptures, as a matter contained in them, the reality of the resurrection, and set before them, out of the same Scriptures, irrefragable evidence that Jesus was both Lord and Christ; who, in the exercise of that character, had shed forth the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, then visible to their eyes, and appealing to the hearing of their ears.

Great is the force of truth, and great was the effect of Peter's spirited address. It penetrated into the hearts of many so piercingly, that, unable to resist the conviction, they cried out "What shall we do?"

Repentance and Baptism were immediately preached as the means for remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost; and they were further told that the promise was not only to themselves who were then present, and to the men of that untoward generation, but unto their children and descendants, even as many as the Lord their God should call. Three thousand persons having gladly received the word which had been addressed to them by St. Peter, as well as the other Apostles, who we cannot suppose were inactive or

silent upon this occasion, were baptized ; thus professing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and engaging themselves to fight against all difficulties which might try and oppress them from the opposition of enemies without, as well as prejudices and passions within ; and thus were there added to the Apostles and their associated companions about three thousand souls.

The Church now assembled at Jerusalem consisted of about three thousand one hundred and twenty persons, men and women ; and these formed, as in the days of the Patriarchs, as it were one family, united in faith and worship, having but one common interest, living together in perfect harmony, no one calling that his own which belonged to his worldly substance, but having a community of goods brought together into one common stock for the mutual support and subsistence of them all.

The history of the world does not present to us a parallel instance of such unity of sentiment, such community of living, divinely inspired as were the Twelve and the members of the Church of Christ established in Jerusalem before the day of Pentecost, and called to repentance and baptism, as were the three thousand who formed the first-fruits of that spiritual harvest of the Gospel, that we need not wonder at, how much soever we

may admire their steadfastness, in spite of opposition, in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and their mutual support of one another with their worldly substance, by imparting to each other their daily bread, whilst their unity of worship in one mind and one spirit encouraged them to shew forth the praises of their Redeemer, and obtained for themselves favour and good report among the people, as well as the approbation of their Lord, "who added to the Church daily such as should be saved."

This was, indeed, a reasonable consequence ; for the sight of such unity could not fail to produce a beneficial effect. We cannot look out upon the works of the creation, and view the earth crowned with gladness, without admiring the power and love of Him who made and pronounced all these things good ; so neither could many in Jerusalem, who were not given over to a reprobate heart, behold the beauty of holiness displayed in the conduct of the first fruits of the Christian Church, without admiring the power manifested in that blessed change. Their admiration led them to inquire more closely, and according to the promise, "they who seek shall find," their closer inquiry conducted them to that happy conclusion, which caused them to avow their sorrow for the past by repentance, and to embrace the Gospel

of Jesus Christ, by the outward profession of baptism.

The place where the Apostles and their converts, increasing daily in number, are supposed to have met for their Christian worship, for they were still regular also in their ministrations in the Temple, was the upper room of the house in which they were assembled at the day of Pentecost. This is supposed to have been the very room—the guest-chamber—which the Saviour had hallowed, by instituting in it the Christian Passover, at his Last Supper with his Disciples—that room in which, on different occasions, on the first day of the week, he had appeared after his resurrection, to confirm the truth of his own Messiahship, and console the hearts of his sorrowing followers. Tradition, (and why should Ecclesiastical Tradition be of less authority in matters of fact and locality, than the annals of even profane historians?) Tradition points out the house as having been situated on Mount Sion, overlooking the Temple, on the site of which in after times a church was built, called the Church of Sion, to which St. Jerome applies these words of the Psalmist (lxxxvii. 1, 2,) “ Her foundations are on the holy mountain; the Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.”

CHAPTER III.

A.D. 30.

ACTS III. 4-32.

First Apostolic Miracle.—Solomon's Porch.—Apprehension of Peter and John.—Their Conduct before the Sanhedrim, and Liberation.—Prayer of the Assembled Church.

IN this state of unity, daily increasing in converts, influenced by the preaching of the Apostles and the exemplary conduct of the believers, the Christian Church continued, probably, for about one year before the first evidence of their power to work miracles—a gift included in their original appointment—by the Apostles was given. Although it was their custom to meet daily in the upper room of the house on Mount Sion, to provoke one another to love, and to join in Christian worship, they were equally attentive to the Temple service. On one occasion, when Peter and John were proceeding together to the evening sacrifice, which was daily offered in the Temple according to the institution of Moses, they beheld a poor cripple, about forty years of age, lying near to one of its gates, called Beautiful. This

gate had been built by Herod the Great, of brass elaborately wrought and curiously ornamented, as an entrance into the Court of the Gentiles. It was thirty cubits (about forty-five feet) high, and fifteen cubits broad. At this gate they beheld a man who had been lame from his birth, whose only subsistence appears to have been derived from the casual alms of those who frequented the Temple for worship. This man, as was his custom, asked an alms of the two Apostles, who, we must remember, had no worldly possessions, on account of the community of goods amongst the Disciples, with which to answer such appeals of charity. But they possessed a greater treasure, from the supplies of which they could bestow, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gifts more precious than gold and silver. A portion of that treasure was not withheld from the poor cripple, who not only needed the boon, but possessed the only quality which rendered him capable of receiving it.

The name of Jesus of Nazareth, pronounced by St. Peter, was the key which unlocked that treasury; for no sooner did the Apostle command him in that name to rise up and walk, than to his extended hand the cripple arose, having immediately received strength to leap up, and stand, and walk, and accompany his benefactors into the

Temple. Nor was strength infused into his body only. His soul received power, which he testified by the liveliest demonstrations of joy, and gratitude, and attachment to his deliverers. Both the time and place caused the miracle to become conspicuous ; it was about the hour of evening sacrifice, the ninth hour of the Jewish day, corresponding with three o'clock of our afternoon, and the place was a public thoroughfare for the Jewish worshippers. Many, therefore, were necessarily spectators and witnesses of what had taken place ; and great must have been their astonishment when they beheld him, whom they had been accustomed to see carried by others, now verifying the prophetic description given by Isaiah (xxxv. 6,) of the effects of Messiah's kingdom "leaping as an hart," and eagerly pressing along to mix with them in the courts of the Lord's house with willing feet.

The place where this miracle had been wrought was near to the entrance of the outer court of the Gentiles. The space between this and Solomon's porch was sufficient to afford not only those who were present at the working of the miracle, but others also, an opportunity of seeing the lame man walking and praising God. This porch or portico was built by Solomon, on the eastern side of the Temple, on a part of the valley which lay

adjacent to Mount Sion. It was a stupendous structure, supported by a wall four hundred cubits (six hundred feet) high, built of stones, said to have been each of them twenty cubits long and six cubits deep. It was the only portion of the original Temple which survived the devastation of the Chaldean conquerors, B.C. 588. It was here that our Saviour, at the feast of Dedication, preceding the last Passover, was rudely assailed by the Jews, for declaring his unity with the Father, and compelled to retire beyond Jordan from Jerusalem, to which place he no more returned until his triumphal entry from Bethany and Mount Olives, five days before his cruel death.

In this porch or portico Peter and John were detained by the eager and overflowing zeal of the restored cripple, which gave time for a large concourse of people to flock together, attracted by the strange report of what had been done; and it afforded an opportunity to the Apostles, which they were not slow in seizing upon, of turning the event into an occasion of glory to God and the conversion of sinners. St. Peter seeing the concourse, and remembering his commission as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, immediately addressed them; and as before, on the day of Pentecost, he had referred to the Hebrew Scriptures, as foretelling what then took place, so

did he on this occasion prove, by a convincing argument drawn from the same Scriptures, that he, "whose name, through faith in his name, had made this man strong," whom they had slain in ignorance, and who should again come "at the restitution of all things," was "that Prophet" to whom Moses had referred in his writings as his successor, whom they should "hear in all things, whatsoever he should say unto them," and to whom all the prophets had borne witness, from Samuel downwards: whose power, therefore, it was dangerous to slight, especially by them the children of Abraham and heirs of his covenant.

This address appears to have occupied some considerable time, during which the report of the miracle had arrested the attention of several of the priests, who, with the captain of the temple, that is, the officer who commanded the guard of Levites there in waiting, and with some of the Sadducees, broke in upon the crowd, and prevented the Apostles from proceeding further with their appeal, and the people from shewing the effect which it had produced upon them. The Sadducees more especially were exasperated, because the prominent doctrine avouched by the Apostles was the resurrection,—a doctrine which their sect entirely denied. Laying, therefore, rude hands upon the Apostles as persons guilty of

sedition, and as the evening was now drawing on, and the hour of judgment was already past, they committed them to prison until the next day, when they could be brought before the Jewish Council to answer for the charge laid against them.

Thus the first display of the power of miracles given by the Apostles was met with the same spirit of rancour and persecution by the Jews, which had hunted their Master even unto death. But the opposition of the priests, and the rancour of the Sadducees, so far from smothering the force of the Apostles' address, seemed only as it were to confirm and establish it. Many who heard the word believed, and five thousand men enrolled themselves among that noble band of Christian professors, whom no intimidation could awe, and no pains and penalties suppress. These waited not to be convinced by the powerful example of unflinching courage exhibited by Peter and John on the following morning, when called before an extraordinary Council of the Sanhedrim, consisting of the greatest, the most learned, and most powerful men of the nation, amongst whom were Annas, with all his kindred, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander. This Annas was the person who had directed all the proceedings of the Jews against Jesus Christ. He

was the most powerful man of his day, having seen five of his own sons successively and several of his sons-in-law promoted to the dignity of high-priest, from which office he himself had been deposed by the Romans, who, in their depriving him of the title, failed to abridge the influence of his authority amongst his countrymen. Caiaphas was his son-in-law, and high-priest both at the time of our Lord's crucifixion and on this occasion of the persecution of his Apostles. John, another member of this conclave, was distinguished for being the scholar of Hillel, and the successor of Symeon, the son of Gamaliel, who was president of the Council when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans ; of which event he is said, on the occasion of the gates of the Temple flying open of their own accord, to have uttered this prophetic declaration : " O Temple ! Temple ! why dost thou disturb thyself ? I know thy end that thou shalt be destroyed : for so the prophet Zechariah has spoken concerning thee : ' Open thy door, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.' " He attained a great age, and lived to see the prediction which he had uttered forty years before (about the period of this extraordinary Council) fulfilled. Alexander also, according to the account given of him by Josephus, was not only the richest and most noble of

all the Jews residing in Alexandria, the seat of learning and commerce, but a most munificent patron of the Temple at Jerusalem, having embellished its nine gates with plates of gold and silver.

Before these powerful and distinguished members of the Jewish Council the two Apostles were placed, and called upon to declare "by what power, or by what name," they had wrought the miracle of the preceding day.

Peter boldly avowed before them all, that the name which had been so effectual to the working of the miracle not only was that of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had a few months before crucified, whom God had raised from the dead," but that it was "the only name under heaven given among men by which they must be saved." Astonished at the boldness of his speech no less than the force of his argument, they were, doubtlessly, strongly reminded of that power of innocency and spirit of might which, in the person of their Master, had resisted all their subtleties, and braved all the temptations of terror and threatening. They saw in the prisoners before them men who were not only followers of the doctrine of that despised Galilean, but possessors of the same spirit of truth and determination which had drawn from Pilate reiterated acknow-

ledgments of his innocence. They saw the Galilean rudeness of person, and heard their uncourtly manner of speech ; and this, backed as it was by the presence of the man whose infirmity had been healed, increased their wonder, and compelled them to admit that a notable miracle had indeed been done.

The Apostles were removed to a little distance, in order to give the Council an opportunity of conferring together, and on their being called in again they were “ straitly threatened to speak henceforth no more in that name.” This was a tacit avowal of the opinion of Annas, and Caia-phas, and John, and Alexander, and the other members of the Council, of the power and influence of the mere name of Him which they had hitherto associated with all that was degraded and contemptible among men. It betrayed their fear of that name, which a few months before had been received with blasphemy, when that of Barabbas, a robber and a murderer, had been preferred before it, and received with approbation and high applause.

Acquitted, or rather commanded to withdraw from the Council, the Apostles deprecated the condition of their release, by boldly avowing that as it was their duty, so should it be their determination, at all hazards, “ to speak the things

which they had heard and seen ;” that is, to publish abroad the miracles of their Master, and, preaching the doctrines which he had taught them, to inculcate the ordinances of the faith which he had established. No threatening could drive them from this resolution. They remembered their Master’s promise to be with them ; and the certainty of his triumph over death and the grave gave them confidence in his promise, and courage to emulate his example. They withdrew from the Council, having resisted all intimidations repeated against them by the rulers, and having excited in the minds of the people great admiration of their boldness and spirit ; “ for all men glorified God for that which was done.”

Nor was there less of joy and gladness among the members of the Church, to whom the Apostles, “ being let go,” returned, and to whom, as an earnest of the truth of their declaration to the Council, they made known what they had seen and heard in respect of the late miracle, and also the threatenings of the chief priests and elders. They saw in the threatenings cause of alarm, but they knew in whom they trusted, and to whom to betake themselves for help and strength ; with one accord therefore they poured forth their joint supplications to God, the Creator

of heaven and earth, that he would behold the threatenings of their enemies, and give strength and support to his servants, the ministers of his Son Jesus Christ, that they might boldly speak the word of truth, and be endowed with power to work miracles in confirmation of their mission, “by the name of the holy child Jesus.”

This is the first recorded prayer offered in unity of spirit, unity of agreement, and with one mind and one mouth, of the united and assembled Church of Christ; and, as at the Dedication of the Tabernacle by Moses, and of the Temple by Solomon, and at the giving of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the Almighty gave a sign of acceptance, so on this occasion “the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

CHAPTER IV.

A.D. 31, 32.

ACTS IV. 32, to the end.

Union and Concord of the Church.—Punishment of Ananias and Sapphira.—Its effects upon the Church.—Increase of Converts.—Healing of the Sick.—Rage of the Sanhedrim.—The Apostles thrown into Prison; delivered by an Angel.—Their boldness before the Jewish Council.—Peter's Address.—Gamaliel's Advice.

THE picture of the Christian Church at this period is one which shall only again be realised at the consummation of all things, when peace and righteousness, the true characteristics of the Messiah's kingdom, shall meet together and dwell among men; when Ephraim shall no more envy Judah, and Judah shall cease to vex Ephraim: but the savage passions of corrupted nature shall be changed into meekness, and love, and charity, and universal concord shall shed its blessings upon earth. They had a community of goods, an agreement of worship, unity of faith, and each one honoured and loved his brother as himself. Hence there were no petty jealousies, no rival

claims, no jarring interests, no swellings of ambition, no tyranny of pride. As in Paradise, before the fall, peace and harmony prevailed, so in this early period of the primitive Church of Christ, collected and held together by the influence of the Holy Spirit, all was harmony and love, readiness of obedience, cheerfulness of devotion, unity of principle, community of daily bread. For nearly two years this state of happiness, realised on earth, continued without a spot to dim its brightness; when, as if to serve as an awful warning that no one should presume to enter into that holy fellowship who were not pure of heart, and ready to forsake all to follow Christ, occurred the transgression of Ananias and his wife Sapphira. Previous to their embracing Christianity, and professing the faith of Jesus, they had possessed a certain property. This had been disposed of by their own consent, in order that the proceeds of the estate might be thrown into the general fund. But as the Israelites after their deliverance from Egyptian slavery, and when fed with manna from heaven, still lusted for the flesh-pots of Egypt, so in the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira there still nestled the seeds of worldliness. Instead of laying the whole of the money which they had received in exchange for their lands at the Apostles' feet, as Joses surnamed

Barnabas had done, they withheld a part, they made a reservation, they practised a deception as useless as it was gross. They had not been compelled to sell their property. No such sacrifice of worldly possession was exacted from them. It was entirely a voluntary action, resting upon faith in the power of God to provide for his people, who were willing to give themselves up wholly and without reserve to him and his service. As their faith was imperfect, they were led, in their imitation of that which was good, to yield to that which was evil by making a reservation; the attempt of which was a practical deceit, an imposition upon man, an attempt to deceive the Holy Spirit of God, the manifestation of which had been attended with such wonderful power and effect, both on the day of Pentecost and in the miracle of the cripple made whole, and under whose special guidance and protection they had now for nearly two years lived in security with God for their help. In endeavouring, therefore, to practise this imposition upon the Holy Ghost, they vainly attempted to deceive and mock God. This was an awful crime, especially at such a time when wonders were on all hands of them, and every one was engaged in glorifying God; and awfully was it punished. Revealed to the Apostles by the Holy Spirit, it was directly charged

in the presence of the Church upon Ananias by the Apostle St. Peter, who had no sooner declared to him the enormity of his sin in lying to the Holy Ghost, who was God, than the guilty and self-convicted man fell down and expired, to the great terror and consternation of them all. His breathless body was instantly removed for burial, according to the custom necessarily established in those countries where decomposition rapidly follows death ; and in the course of three hours the same kind of Divine retribution, swift and unerring in its execution, was re-acted on Sapphira, the wife and accomplice of the guilty Ananias. Thus was a signal crime, as signally punished. We are reminded by the circumstances here recorded of a similar kind of summary punishment, inflicted soon after the giving of the Law, upon Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, for their presumptuous impiety “in offering strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not.” (Leviticus x.)

Great was the effect produced on the minds, both of the faithful who were spectators of this awful visitation, and of all who heard of it : and well did it tend to shew the necessity of singleness of heart and purity of purpose in those who would attach themselves to the Christian Church, by taking up the Cross and following Jesus of

Nazareth. It served as a salutary warning to them all, and afforded another proof of the great power of God, that he was "fearful in praises, doing wonders." Nor was the effect of this lost upon the people in general. Although it deterred the insincere from joining themselves to the Church, yet both men and women in great multitudes became converts; and for another year the glorious work of the Gospel spread itself with power and unity throughout Jerusalem. Solomon's porch, where the first miracle had been wrought, became a favourite place of resort to the Christian converts; and signs and wonders were multiplied among the people by the hands of the Apostles: the report of which soon extended beyond the precincts of Jerusalem and drew together multitudes out of the surrounding cities, (as the fame of their Great Master had before done in the regions of Decapolis,) who brought their sick friends with them, and those who were possessed with evil spirits, upon whom the Apostles were enabled, according to their Master's previous declaration, to work cures, and heal them from their plagues.

Another year had passed away in such exercise of wonder-working power, in which daily proofs were given of the fulfilment of the promises of Jesus to his chosen followers. They could not but feel themselves animated with renewed confi-

dence on every fresh occasion of the display of his greatness manifested through their agency. They had, indeed, become fishers of men. The net of the Gospel was spread by their hands, and great and astonishing was the result of their labours. Hitherto they had encountered but little opposition from the prejudices of their governors, who appear to have acted with forbearance, more through a spirit of cautious prudence than from any conviction of the power of truth and clemency. But their forbearance did not realize their hopes. Instead of the Church of Christ falling to decay by its own inherent weakness, as they had vainly calculated, they saw it daily growing in numbers, extending its power, multiplying evidences of its purity and force, and engrossing more and more the attention of the people. The fact of one miracle had induced them to act with cautious forbearance in the case of the cripple ; but now when they beheld many miracles, the sick restored to health, and those who were vexed with unclean spirits purified and cleansed, they could no longer forbear. The party of the Sadducees were again roused into action, and they with the high-priest, who was probably, as Josephus has written, Ananus the son of Annas, and brother-in-law of Caiaphas who was high-priest the past year, a Sadducee, on witnessing the progress of the doctrines of the

Resurrection, and the power of the Apostles, even over unclean spirits (beings whose existence they affected to deny), rose up. Their long pent-up indignation could no longer be restrained: it vented itself in causing them to commit the Apostles to the common prison, as persons of the vilest character and basest conduct.

We may remark in the sequel of this transaction, as also in many other cases, a secret but beautiful coincidence of the operation of the Divine power. The Apostles were committed to an apartment of the common prison by the violent passions of the Sadducean party, who denied the agency of angels and spirits, as well as the doctrine of the Resurrection. In the depth of night, when their malignant persecutors were, perhaps, exulting among themselves over the capture and imprisonment of the Apostles, the darkness of their prison-house was illumined by an angelic visit. One of those spirits who attend continually on the Lord to minister to Him and execute His will, was sent down from heaven, charged with the deliverance of the Apostles from the dungeon. Before his approach the prison doors expanded. He led them out, and, as if to make their deliverance more publicly known, he enjoined them to take their station in the Temple, and speak to the people the doctrines of life and redemption. The

Sadducees denied spiritual agency. Now, as if to convey to them a most palpable proof of the error of their opinion in that respect, an angel, one of the blessed spirits "who circle God's throne, rejoicing," was sent as the agent of the deliverance of the Apostles. The high-priest, who was the highest and most important officer of the Temple, had used his power for their apprehension and imprisonment; and lo, the Temple was appointed to be the scene in which the liberated captives should not only shew themselves delivered from prison, but where they should exhibit their unflinching zeal in that way, and the preaching of those truths, for the sake of which they had drawn down upon themselves the indignation of the ruling powers. There is a coincidence in these circumstances peculiarly deserving our remark and attentive consideration.

The news of the liberation of the Twelve had not transpired when the Council assembled, composed not only of all the senate of the children of Israel, but of the high-priest also. On their assembling, they sent officers to fetch the prisoners; but their messengers soon returned and announced to their employers the astounding fact, that though the doors were closed with all safety, and the keepers were on the watch, yet the prison room was empty: no man could be found therein.

Amid the confusion and surmises to which the return of these messengers gave rise, a person was introduced amongst them, who added to the perplexity of the Council by telling them that their prisoners were standing in the Temple and teaching the people. Shortly afterwards, the Apostles themselves were brought in by the captain of the temple and the officers who had been despatched for that purpose; and who had been constrained through fear of the people, now strongly attached to their prisoners, to treat them in the execution of their duty with gentleness. It was in vain that the Apostles were reminded of the former threatening of Annas and Caiaphas and Alexander and John, and the whole Sanhedrim. It was in vain the high-priest contemptuously spoke of Jesus as a man whose name was too vile to be uttered, by asking them if they intended "to bring this man's blood" upon the Council, according to the imprecation of the people, when they blindly rejected Jesus for Barabbas, and furiously demanded his crucifixion. Undaunted stood the Apostles, and without hesitation did they all with one accord reiterate the expression of their obedience to God rather than to man. Without equivocation they charged the Council with the murder of Jesus; boldly they declared his resurrection, and fearless of every thing, except violation of the truth, they

avowed themselves eye-witnesses of his miraculous power both before and after his death, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, which had been given to them in so surprising a manner. Their unshrinking declaration of these things cut to the heart the members of that combined and collected Council, and so filled them with rage that they consulted how they might put to death persons whom they could by no other means silence or overawe.

But their malignant purpose was arrested by the interposition of Gamaliel, one of the Council; a man so highly distinguished in Jewish literature, that being the second who obtained the name of Rabban, a title of the highest distinction and eminency among their learned men, it was said of him "that from the time Rabban Gamaliel died, the honour of the law failed, and purity and Pharisaism perished." He was the teacher of Saul, afterwards called Paul, and died about eighteen years subsequent to this event, and eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

The proceedings of the Council had been instigated by the Sadducees; Gamaliel was a Pharisee, and the rule of his sect was entirely opposed to them. Strict to the smallest tittle in respect of the forms of the Law, the Pharisees not only acknowledged but advocated the doctrine of the agency of spirits,

and the truth of the resurrection. Some feeling of this kind, as well as his strict sense of prudence and acknowledged principles of integrity, might have induced Gamaliel to stand forward on this occasion to check the persecuting spirit of the Sadducean party. His advice turned on the over-ruling of Providence, which will sustain the upright under all circumstances, and give over to ruin those whose foundation is not laid in truth and equity. He instanced in support of this the cases of Theudas and Judas Gaulonites, who, backed by much more powerful worldly support, had both of them failed in their attempt, and come to nought. Judging from their failure and the dispersion of their followers, he advised the Council to refrain from the Apostles and leave them to the arbitration of Providence, either to fail if false, or if true to go on according to God's good purpose. This advice appears to have quelled the passions of the assembly, and brought them to a more reasonable conclusion than they had at first seemed inclined to come to. The Apostles were, therefore, called back into the assembly (for during the debate they had, as on the former occasion, been removed out of it), and having been beaten were commanded to discontinue speaking in the name of Jesus, and then dismissed. But their courage was not quenched. The same Spirit which had

animated Peter and John on the former occasion, now animated all the Twelve; and that which their enemies had designed as their degradation, but served to reflect honour upon them. Their sufferings were deemed so many causes of joy, so many evidences of their worthiness to fill their present ministry, and so many proofs that he who had called them to be Apostles had told them the truth in respect of trials, no less than of his presence to support and exalt them superior to all difficulties.

They went forth, therefore, from the Council, influenced with higher zeal for their Master's service, seeking every opportunity of making known his name and the power of his Gospel; not only preaching boldly in the Temple, but going from house to house to confirm and establish in the faith all who loved to hear the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V.

A.D. 32 -34.

ACTS VI. VII. VIII. 2.

Appointment of Deacons.—Further Increase of Converts.—
Synagogues of the Foreign Jews.—Their Dispute with
Stephen.—His Courage, Defence, and Martyrdom.

THE effect of the Apostles' zeal and energy, both public and private, was soon manifested by such an increase of converts, and in consequence multiplicity of duties, that the Twelve became unequal to the discharge of all the claims made upon their presence and time. One part of their duties was the management of the funds arising from the sale of estates and community of goods. Out of these they supplied the wants of the poor and necessitous, visiting with relief the fatherless and widows in their afflictions. But as they were but men, and consequently limited in their bodily powers, however active in spirit and zeal, they were not able to attend in all cases both to preaching, which was their paramount duty, and the administration of their charities, which was their daily practice. They were compelled, there-

fore, to trust to others the management of their less important ministrations ; and hence arose an occasion of discontent amongst some foreign Jews, called Grecians, because their poor and necessitous friends had not received from the native Jews the same attention which they had bestowed upon their own immediate brethren who were of Jerusalem and Judea. On a complaint of this nature having been laid before the Apostles, they thought fit to call a general assembly of their converts, and lay the matter before them, in order to suggest to them a remedy. They stated to them, that their own appointment to the discharge of the higher duties of dispensing the word of God according to the commission given by their Divine Master, precluded them from attending to the ministration of the daily charities : a duty which might properly be discharged by others amongst them, less eminently gifted for the ministry of the word. They therefore suggested to the complainants, as well as to the general body of the Christians, the propriety of selecting seven men whom they could recommend for their spiritual qualifications and wisdom, that the Apostles might ordain them for that business. The foreign Christians in Jerusalem are supposed to have been divided into seven classes, having each a separate place of assembly. Hence the number

suggested by the Apostles, that one person might be appointed for each one of these to attend to their wants and superintend the ministration of their daily charities. The persons recommended to the approbation of the Apostles were taken, as their names import, from the Hellenistic Jews, being six of them Jews by birth, and one, Nicolas of Antioch, a proselyte. These were set before the Apostles, and were appointed by their prayers and the imposition of their hands upon them. These seven, namely Stephen, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas the proselyte, were called deacons or ministers, being servants of the Christian Church chosen by the multitude, but ordained by the Apostles for that work. This first appointment of ecclesiastical officers in the Church of Christ, after its consolidation on the day of Pentecost, introduced another order of ministers into it, by the appointment of the Apostles acting under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in addition to those who had been appointed and ordained by Christ himself. The Twelve had received their commission immediately from Jesus, and they in turn were guided by the Holy Spirit to appoint others to hold an inferior office to themselves in the Church. From these two appointments have been derived those degrees in the Christian

priesthood which have prevailed from that period down to our own times, and which, from their institution being derived from Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, would appear to be as lively marks of the Church of Christ as the Levitical priesthood was of that of the Jews. This event forms, therefore, an important epoch in ecclesiastical history, and shews as well the authority of the Apostles in suggesting the appointment, as the exercise of it in confirming by their personal approbation the choice made and submitted to them by the general body of their followers. They left the choice to the people, and when the people had nominated those whom they deemed qualified for the office, not only was the sanction of the Apostles still required, but even that was imperfect until ratified and confirmed by a holy manner of ordination—prayer and imposition of hands.

The establishment of the diaconal office (A.D. 32) was followed by a further increase of proselytes, amongst whom were many of the priests of the Mosaic law, whose conversion to the faith of Jesus must have caused a great sensation in Jerusalem, especially among the chief priests, who necessarily were soon apprised of the circumstance. This probably led to the next outbreak of the persecuting spirit of the Jews, which, not

satisfied as hitherto with inflicting stripes and imprisonment, glutted itself with blood.

There were in Jerusalem at this period, in the fourth or fifth year after the death of our Lord, certain Jews from various parts of Africa, who had come up with their offerings, and being looked upon with an eye of contempt by the native Jews, had a synagogue of their own. This was by no means an uncommon case. The natives of Judea held in great contempt all their countrymen who resided in any other part of the world, except those who dwelt in Babylon and its neighbourhood. They considered them, in some measure, to have lost caste by quitting their native land and adopting a foreign language. And hence arose the necessity why the foreign Jews, when collected in the Holy City, should have a place of their own for public worship. The synagogue used by those from Africa was called that of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrines; and that of Asia, the synagogue of the Cilicians. Alexandria in Egypt, and Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, were two celebrated seats of learning, and the persons from them were probably able disputants, and as such, eager to enter into controversy with the Christian teachers, especially with those amongst them who, like themselves, had been Hellenistic Jews. Hence their

disputation with Stephen, one of the newly-appointed officers of the Christian Church, in the first or second year following the appointment of the Deacons. But however able in disputation and subtle in argument, they could not withstand the power of that truth for which he contended. Scarcely any passion is more bitter or malignant than that of a foiled religious disputant. Such a passion took possession of these Asiatic and African controversialists, when they had been overcome by Stephen, and induced them, as had before been done by the native Jews when they brought unfounded accusations against Jesus, to suborn false witnesses, and charge him with blasphemy against the Temple and the Law of Moses. They, perhaps, remembered how the same charge had aroused the rancour and enmity of the common people against the Founder of the new sect. They knew also that the inhabitants of Jerusalem, like the mass of people in all crowded populations, were always ripe for mischief, and ever ready to envy and pull down the good, because most widely opposed to themselves, and destroy all and every thing, the value and excellency of which served but as galling reproaches to their own vileness and shame. Using, therefore, the people as instruments of their malice, easily inflamed to mischief, and finding

the elders and the scribes willing abettors of their purpose, they took measures to seize upon Stephen and bring him before the Council.

This is the third instance of persecution for the name of Christ ; first, that of Peter and John, on occasion of the miraculous cure of the cripple ; next, that of the Twelve, by reason of the increased number of miracles wrought by them ; and now this, instigated by the conversion of so many of the Levitical priests, and the malice of the foiled disputants of the Hellenistic Jews : but in all these instances the conduct of the persecuted was firm, unflinching, and without compromise.

In this instance the courage of Stephen was very remarkable, and the description given of him when before the Council, by the sacred historian, is at once expressive and animated :—" All that sat in the Council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." It was irradiated with the sunshine of truth ; it gleamed with the expression of a noble soul devoted entirely to the cause of that faith, the Author and Finisher of which was the Sun of Righteousness. But the peculiar animation of his features was not more attractive than the boldness of his speech and the cutting force of his argument were remarkable. His address to the Sanhedrim, in reply to the question of the high-priest,

rebutts the charge of blasphemy alleged against him, by referring to the call of Abraham, and embodying the history of the subsequent establishment of the Law, and of the rebellions and infidelity of the people, together with the changing of the Tabernacle of Witness, which they had in the wilderness, into the building of the Temple by Solomon. Being interrupted at this part of his address, he spared not the stiffnecked and persecuting conduct of their forefathers towards the Prophets of old, and of themselves towards that Just One, of whom they had been so recently the betrayers and murderers.

This was a reproach too pungent to escape punishment; too true not to excite the most violent opposition. They knew not how to contain their rage. It shewed itself in the greatest bitterness of mortified conviction and in gnashing of teeth. What a contrast does their infuriated appearance exhibit to that of the angelic expression of Stephen's countenance with which he began his defence, and of that enthusiasm of gaze with which he penetrated into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God! How strikingly does his declaration of beholding the Son of Man thus highly exalted evince the force of his reasoning, and the truth of that Saviour's own pre-

diction ! It was a proof, were proof wanting, that all he had uttered was from God, and left no room for sincerity to doubt or humility to fear.

They who could resist that practical force of argument were indeed hardened, were given over to a reprobate heart ; and as they who reject God, spare not man, so they who heard Stephen without being convinced of anything but their own bloody spirit of persecution, rushed at once upon him, and without waiting for a judicial sentence, cast him out of the city, and as one convicted of blasphemy stoned him until he died. They only, however, could kill the body. They could not deprive him of his holy trust in the Saviour Jesus Christ, for the asserting of whose Divinity it was that he was hurried to his death, and into whose hands he commended his spirit ; neither could they extinguish the flame of that heavenly love by which, in imitation of his Great Exemplar, he prayed for his enemies, that this sin might not be laid to their charge. Well has the sacred historian expressed his death, by saying " he fell asleep." The manner of his death was violent, and painful, and cruel ; but the passing of his soul from its mangled and bloody tenement was as the taking of rest in sleep—mild, gentle, easy, calm, and tranquil.

Such was the death of the first Christian mar-

tyr, in the thirty-third or thirty-fourth year of the Christian era, no less illustrative of the increasing wickedness of the Jewish people, than of the power of faith in Jesus, which could sustain the weakness and infirmity of the flesh triumphant over the most violent enmity of Satan and the cruelty of wicked men. Neither was Stephen left unhonoured in death. They who had known and loved him when alive, who had been made partakers of the same holy calling of the Gospel, and members of the Church of the living God on earth, forsook not his cold, and lifeless, and disfigured body. They gathered round it, unawed by the popular frenzy, and taking it up, they carried it to burial in solemn order, and “made great lamentation over him.”

CHAPTER VI.

A.D. 34.

ACTS VIII. 3, to the end.

First General Persecution.—Saul.—Flight of the Disciples.—Philip.—The Gospel preached in Samaria.—Its Success.—Simon Magus.—Peter and John are sent from Jerusalem to bestow the Gift of the Holy Spirit on the Samaritan Converts.—Conversion of Judich, the Ethiopian.—The Gospel preached in the Provinces of Judea.—Gospel of St. Matthew.

THE public murder of Stephen, effected during a popular commotion which had been excited by the baffled vanity and malicious intolerance of proselyting zeal, was like “the letting out of water.” Followed as it was by the public burial, with which devout men had honoured his mangled body, it seemed to open the flood-gates of cruelty so long pent up by worldly maxims, and overruled by the interposition of Divine Providence; for He that had worked hitherto continued still to work; He who had promised to be with his Church for ever, was not wanting to the truth of his word. Worldly rage was now permitted to be

let loose upon his followers. Persecution visited the Church, and selected not, as heretofore, their leaders and inspired teachers only, but visited indiscriminately the mass of the people themselves, the low and obscure, the unobtrusive and meek, the quiet and unpresuming worshippers of a lowly and crucified Master. The lightning of Sadducean rancour had been launched against the pillars of the faith. It had passed harmlessly by, or rather had tended to confirm them more strongly in the truth. The violence of popular clamour had visited a smaller column of the Christian temple, and overthrown it with a ruin which seemed but to display the excellency of its beauty and the solidity of its foundation. Now the stones and smaller works, which had before escaped the bursting of the storms, were about to become exposed to that desolation which for awhile scattered and dispersed them apart from one another. This was the first general persecution of the Christian Church. It was a Jewish persecution. It was the malice of the old law, perverted from its original and high purpose to assert the bigotry of superstition, and foment the hacknied cruelty of worldly passions. In it the most discordant principles were brought to act in unity, as if to display how vile is the enormity of the human heart, uninfluenced by truth and un-

guided by spiritual motives. The rigid superstitions of the Pharisees were as abhorrent from true holiness as was the formal coldness of the worldly maxims of the Sadducees themselves. They were both equally opposed to truth, which, as their mutual and inflexible enemy, became the object of the unsparing hatred and rancorous malice of them both. Like a young lion which has just fleshed his teeth in recent slaughter, the death of the first martyr seems to have whetted their appetite for blood.

The first general persecution is remarkable as being the beginning of that series of bloody storms which the prince of the powers of darkness raised up against the followers of truth, and for introducing to our notice the name of Saul of Tarsus. He is represented as consenting unto the death of Stephen. He sustained no active part in the murder, although so far abetting it as to take charge of the garments of the two witnesses, whose hands were first upon him to put him to death.

But this passive acquiescence was soon turned into a zeal the most active, and a cruelty the most implacable. The young man who had been but a spectator and conniver at the death of one man became a furious persecutor of many. Like a bloody and ravening wolf (the emblem of the

tribe of Benjamin to which he belonged) laying waste a vine, or scattering and devouring a sheepfold, he made havoc of the Church, not as the Libertines by open discussion, or as the Sadducees by bringing them to judgment by a judicial process—no, his zeal was too fiery for such slow and methodical proceedings. Like the forked lightning, it penetrated the inmost recesses of houses; it visited the privacy of families; it stalked with its violation into the secrecy of domestic life. “He entered into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.”

We have no account of the number of his victims, but so great was the terror inspired by his persecuting and indiscriminate zeal, that all the members of the Christian Church forsook Jerusalem and fled, except the twelve Apostles; nobly resigned to brave all storms, and divinely inspirited to perform the important duties entrusted to their charge, they fled not. They knew the power of their Master victorious over death. They believed in God, they believed in Him, they trusted in the Spirit, and they were holpen. Though the waves of persecution raged horribly, God who reigned on high was mightier. He allowed, indeed, his faithful flock to be scattered before the ravening fury of the wolf, in

order to try their faith and exercise their patience ; but he was the same God who had delivered Daniel from the den of lions, and his three faithful worshippers from the devouring flames on the plains of Dura. He knew how to succour them in time of trouble. In one mind and one spirit, therefore, the pillars of the Church stood erect and firm, unmoved by persecution, inflexible amid the violence of desolation. They fled not from Jerusalem.

As they had remained in that city until the day of Pentecost was fully come, according to their Master's command ; so now, in obedience to the dictates of the same Great Head, they continued to abide in the place which he had appointed for their sphere of duty, until the time should come when the sound of the voice of the Gospel should be heard beyond the walls of the Holy City.

One great consequence of the dispersion of the Jews in the Babylonish captivity had been to diffuse more extensively the knowledge of Jehovah and his dispensation to Israel throughout the world, so that the vanquished became the teachers of their conquering masters. In the dispersion of the first Christians, likewise, a way was opened to diffuse the influence of the Sun of Righteousness more generally than before. The

rays of its brightness had hitherto centred upon Jerusalem only ; they were now about to rise upon the darkness which was in the land of Judah, and thence spreading illumine all the known world. On Samaria that light first rested. The harbinger of glad tidings to that ancient seat of patriarchal possessions was Philip, one of the seven who had been ordained by the Apostles on the occasion of the complaint of the Hellenistic Jews respecting the neglect of their widows in the daily ministration. As they could no longer serve tables in Jerusalem, the Deacons were now called upon to discharge other and more important duties ; and as Stephen had, in his defence before the Council, preached Jesus to the Jews, and asserted and proved him to be the Prophet foretold by Moses, to whom they were bound to hearken ; so did Philip preach the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ to the Samaritans. They were not ignorant of that name ; for the Saviour himself had made the first revelation of his Messiahship to one of their inhabitants at Sychar ; and as he had first revealed himself to a Samaritan, so was Samaria made the first place in which, after his death, he was preached out of Jerusalem. When Philip, therefore, preached unto the Samaritans Christ, and wrought miracles in his name to

shew that his mission to them was in the Spirit of that Divine Person, who a very few years before had astonished them by his preaching and knowledge, they readily received that message, and acknowledged the authority of his mission; so that great joy pervaded their city—that joy which arises from the conviction of truth, and the power of that “Gospel which was able to make them wise unto salvation.”

There were, undoubtedly, in Samaria some who (as Simeon and Anna in the Temple waiting for the consolation of Israel, recognised at once the heavenly babe in his presentation to God,) had cherished a grateful remembrance of his visit, and to whom the sound of his name, and the preaching of his power, appeared as the voice of former things awakening them to truth and holiness. Their former impressions had, indeed, been tampered with by an impostor named Simon, who had arrogated to himself one of the titles which had been attached by general opinion to the expected Messiah, “The Power of God,” and by vain delusions and tricks had “bewitched the people of Samaria.” Yet his influence fell before the preaching of Philip. The people forsook the impostor and listened to and believed the messenger of truth; nay, even Simon himself believed also; and when he had made a profession of this

belief, he was admitted into the covenant of Christ by baptism. Together with him also were many others baptized; for it is to be remembered that baptism formed the initiatory rite of admittance into the Church of Christ in the age of the Apostles, who acted under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit, without regard to sex or age. Circumcision had been the initiatory ordinance of the covenant of God with Abraham, which he had also ratified at the giving of the Law; but that "sign of the seal of righteousness by faith" was necessarily limited in its operation, like the covenant into which it formed the admission. But as the covenant of grace was intended for general adoption, unlimited in its object and unexclusive in its obligation, so the means of admission into it partook of the same expansion: hence the use of baptism was not restricted to sex or age; and therefore it is we read of the baptism, not only of individuals converted by the preaching of the Apostles and their fellow-workers in the ministry, but of families and households also.

The news of the reception of the Word of God by the Samaritans reached the Apostles at Jerusalem, and must greatly have gladdened their hearts amid that trying period of persecution and suffering. It found them not unmindful of the

work to which they had been appointed, nor of the means by which that work was, by their agency, to be carried on. Constituted as the agents or instruments by whom the Head of the Church had appointed the Gospel to be made known, and the Temple of Christianity to be builded up on earth, they were called upon to be unwearied in their labours, exact and particular in minutely observing according to "decency and order," the outward means of erecting that glorious edifice which, "fitly framed together, might grow unto an holy temple in the Lord." Accordingly, "when the Apostles which were in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John."

It would appear that the Apostles had consulted together when they heard of the conversion of Samaria, and the result of their counsel was the mission of Peter and John, delegated from their body, to complete by higher authority the good work which commenced under the preaching of Philip the Deacon. The converts of Samaria had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, but the gift of the Holy Spirit had not been made to them. That awaited the prayer of the Apostles and the imposition of their hands. An outward ordinance appears, there-

fore, to have been requisite for the bestowal of the inward grace, in reference to the first establishment of the Christian Church in Samaria; and hence we infer the higher authority of the Apostles above that of Philip, who had received his appointment by ordination of the Twelve.

The sight of the gift of the Holy Spirit, conveyed by the outward act of Peter and John, appears to have awakened in the corrupt heart of Simon Magus sentiments of admiration, partaking rather of worldly speculation than spiritual purity. Having himself formerly deluded the people by tricks and magical acts, he corruptly thought the power which he saw exercised by the Apostles to be of the same nature, only brought to greater perfection. He, therefore, rashly offered the Apostles money. He attempted to purchase by earthly dross the heavenly gift. His conversion had not been real. He had mistaken the character and nature of the new calling. His heart had not been turned from corruption to purity, as the heart of John had been from a persecuting spirit, which he had exhibited when he asked Jesus to call down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans who would not receive them into their city, to that of love and kindness with which he now visited them to impart unto them spiritual gifts. Simon

had been initiated into the Church, and he had abode with Philip in the daily witness of signs and wonders without entering into the spirituality of its service, its singleness of mind, self-devotion, and heavenly objects, to be sought and gained only by holiness and faith.

The answer of Peter to the offer of Simon' is very characteristic of the zeal of the Apostle, powerful in rebuke, yet, as if mindful of his own former mistaken notions, holding forth the hope of pardon, consequent upon true repentance and prayer to God. The effect of his address was, that the convicted Magus entreated the Apostles to pray for him, that he might be delivered from the consequence of his impure and perverse conduct. The Ecclesiastical History does not afford further record of Simon, but it is probable from other accounts, that, like Balaam, he sinned against conviction, and continued apostate.

Peter and John having thus performed the primary object of their mission, did not return direct to Jerusalem to give an account of it to those who sent them, but went through many villages of the Samaritans preaching the Gospel. On a former occasion, when their Master sent them forth, they were forbidden to enter into the towns of Samaria. A more enlarged sphere of duty now opened upon them in their appointment

to preach the Gospel to every creature. The message to Israel had been rejected, and the time was gradually coming on when salvation was to be proclaimed to the Gentiles. The Samaritans occupied a kind of middle position between the Gentiles and the Jews. Composed of both they formed a race distinct from both, yet mixing up in their polity customs and habits derived indiscriminately from their respective origin. In preaching the Gospel to them, therefore, the Apostles broke down the middle wall of partition which separated Jew from Gentile; and this circumstance might have served to shew them that the time was now at hand when, according to their Master's expression to the woman at Jacob's well, neither to Mount Gerizim nor yet to Jerusalem should the worship of the true God be confined.

Another evidence of the great change which was thus about to be accomplished was afforded by the conversion of Judich, treasurer of Queen Candace, an Ethiopian, who was met by Philip in his progress, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from Samaria southward towards Jerusalem. This Ethiopian was a proselyte, and his visit to Jerusalem, from which he was returning when met by Philip, had been for the purpose of worship. His inquiring mind had led him to

search the Scriptures; and he was reading the Book of the Prophet Isaiah as he journeyed homeward in his chariot. But though he read, there was a veil on his understanding; he knew not of whom the Prophet had written (liii. 7, 8,)—"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth." When, therefore, he asked of Philip, (who had been invited by him to come up and sit with him in the chariot, after he had saluted him with the inquiry, "Understandest thou what thou readest?") whether the Prophet had spoken these words of himself or of some other man, Philip "opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." He shewed him how all these wonderful and apparently inconsistent things, spoken of by the Prophet eight hundred years before, were fulfilled even to the very letter in Jesus Christ, whose Gospel it was now his duty to preach and proclaim, calling upon men everywhere to repent and believe that Gospel.

As soon as the eunuch, impressed with the force of Philip's reasoning, had expressed his belief in Christ and his desire to be baptized in his name, and had heartily confessed him to be

the Son of God, he received baptism. Philip had no sooner admitted his new convert into the Christian Church by baptism, than the same Spirit, which had directed his course from Samaria and towards the chariot of the Ethiopian, again fell upon him and took him away, so that the eunuch saw him no more. But though he was again left alone to pursue his homeward journey, he passed on with joyfulness. Whilst "he went on his way rejoicing," Philip reached Azotus, or Ashdod, mentioned in the Old Testament as being the seat of the god Dagon, where the Philistines placed the Ark of God after they had taken it from the people of Israel at the battle of Eben-ezer, in which the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain, B.C. 1141. Passing through Azotus Philip proceeded on his mission, preaching Jesus in Joppa, Lydda, Saron, and other cities in that maritime district, until he arrived at Cæsarea, where it appears he remained stationary for a considerable period of time.

Nor was Philip the only one who, in the dispersion of the Christians by the first general persecution, preached the word of life: others, who were scattered abroad, carried with them also, wherever they went, the precious treasure of the Gospel, and made known in the various parts

of the province of Judea the message of glad tidings, publishing an account not only of their own convictions and experience, but of all things which had taken place at Jerusalem. And to give effect to their oral communications something more was added. The dispersed were Hebrews ; and as it appears beyond controversy that the GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW was written originally in Hebrew, and for the use of his countrymen, so is it more than probable that it was first published at this period, A.D. 34. The object of the Evangelist in writing it was to comfort and console those who, driven from the Holy City on account of their faith, like David when hunted by Saul, not only longed for the holy assemblies from which they were now excluded, but who would find refreshment in their banishment from reading a digest of those things, part of which they had heard, part seen, which had drawn them from Jewish errors to admit Jesus to be the Messiah, the Expected Deliverer, “who should redeem them from their sins.”

CHAPTER VII.

A.D. 35.

ACTS IX. 1.-19.

The Conversion of Saul.—Damascus.

WE now come to a period deeply interesting in the history of the Christian Church. We have seen the effect of the Jewish persecution carried on in Jerusalem against the followers of Christ, how it scattered them abroad, and caused them to preach the Gospel in Samaria and other parts of the province of Judea. The bursting out of that persecution introduced to our notice the name of Saul, a young man, who at first took only a passive part in the violence done to Stephen, the first Christian martyr. The further progress of that persecution exhibited the looker-on as a zealot unwearied in bitterness, unboundedly active in making havoc of those, whom he considered enemies of his faith and of the Law of Moses. It next presents him, after having ravaged Jerusalem and caused the objects of his fury to betake themselves to flight to other places

of abode where they might dwell in safety, gaining so much additional zeal for persecution by the success which had attended his zeal in the Holy City, that he demanded and obtained from the high-priest, Caiaphas, the unsparing persecutor of Jesus Christ, letters of credit from him to the synagogues at Damascus; empowering him to carry on the same rigorous persecution in that city, and to bring all, whether men or women, whom he might find following the way of the Gospel, bound to Jerusalem. Damascus was a principal town of Syria, thickly peopled by Jews, about 120 miles from Jerusalem, and under the power of the Romans; who, however, allowed the Jewish Council the privilege of exercising their power in religious matters, over all synagogues and assemblies in that and other places, which were willing to submit to their jurisdiction.

Armed, therefore, with the delegated authority of the high-priest, this zealous persecutor of the infant Church of Christ set out on his mission of blood and punishment. Young and active, and inflamed with the fire of learning and resentment, the faculties of his mind, deeply imbued in pharisaical erudition and highly cultivated by general literature, were well accorded to by the powers of his body. His was no common zeal,—his character was of no ordinary stamp,—his

abilities, both natural and acquired, were superior to those of the generality of his countrymen. From his birth-place, Tarsus, he derived the advantage of an enlarged system of mental cultivation, which but rendered his studies at Jerusalem under the tuition of the celebrated Gamaliel, the more formidable to the opposers of Judaism, and himself more bigoted in the way of his fathers. For when he compared the vast superiority of the code of religion and morals bestowed upon his countrymen over that of the heathens, with whose choicest works of ethics he was conversant, he could not but exult in the advantages of the Jew, so as to learn to despise all others. The most profound researches of heathen philosophy were poor and mean, when contrasted with the Mosaic Law ; and the loftiest flights of Greek and Roman poets fell far below the bards of Israel, who, divinely inspired, not merely sang of truths, but sang of them in strains glowing with heavenly fire. The mighty masters of language and philosophy, therefore, were held in contempt by this pupil of the academies of Tarsus, this proficient of the Talmudical school. How much more contemptible must the fishers of Galilee have appeared to his inflated mind ! Contemptible as regarded their literature, and worse than vain in their attempt to defy and reform the Law of Moses and

the tradition of the elders. But when he saw their poverty and meanness supported by evidences, which convinced many of the truth of their mission and the importance of their preaching, his contempt was turned into the gall of bitterness—religious rancour fretted his mind.

Zeal for the service of Him whom he worshipped as the God of his fathers—zeal for that worship which for fifteen hundred years had exercised the devotion of the best and most holy of his countrymen, became the torch which lighted into a flame all the passions of his heart, all the acquirements of his mind, and sent him forth an unsparing, indefatigable persecutor of those, upon whom the acuteness of his learning had no effect, and whom the authority of tradition and Talmudical interpretation failed to convince. Weak and unsupported by human power, and for wise and gracious purposes allowed, like a harmless and timid flock, to be scattered before the ravager, the followers of Christ had not wherewith to resist his persecution. But in all his zeal and the havoc which he made of the Church, he appears to have had but one object: it was not to glorify himself—it was to promote the doctrines of his sect, which he vainly imagined to be the only truth, the only mode of religion acceptable to Jehovah. In our estimate, therefore, of Saul's

unsparing violence to the Christians, we are not to consider him as acting from any low or base motive, but rather from a perverted judgment, blinded by prejudice and warped by education, but sincere in its object. We may hence infer how blind a guide is Sincerity, when wrongly directed, or governed by Passion and Error.

But the same qualities which rendered Saul so formidable an enemy to his feebler and less learned opponents, rendered him more likely to be convinced of his errors when brought into contact with a higher intelligence and superior endowments. Instances are not wanting to shew the bitterest enemies converted into the warmest friends, and the most active adversaries changed into the most steadfast defendants, of those whom they had before gone about to compass and destroy. So it was with Saul. He believed in Moses ; he believed in the Jewish Scriptures, interpreted according to the learning of the sages, in whose wisdom and superior attainments he trusted without questioning, and whose decisions he admitted as implicitly as if spoken by God himself. Hence his zeal, his bigotry, his persecuting spirit, his sincerity in thinking that he ought of a truth "to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." In all other respects, in strict conformity to outward ordinances,

in a rigid observance of all moral duties, and in his zeal towards God according to the most perfect manner of the law of the fathers, he was blameless. He was not, therefore, by any means an unfitting character for the part which he was hereafter to sustain; neither was his conversion, still less his subsequent conduct, an unlikely event, then, judged of even by human principles. But overruled by God, brought into contact with a visible display, not only of the Divine Glory but of the Divine Person of Christ himself, and appealed to by the Bath-Col, the voice of God, we do not need the aid of human principles to account for his conversion.

That wonderful and important event occurred A.D. 35, on his way to Damascus, commissioned by Caiaphas and the Jewish Sanhedrim to persecute the Christians, whom he might find congregated in that city. He is represented as journeying, inflamed with a spirit of revenge and slaughter, and accompanied by persons, either sent by his superiors to give greater *éclat* to his commission, or selected by himself as an escort and guard. He had nearly accomplished his journey, when “suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.” This appearance was followed by a supernatural voice, which Saul acknowledged to be divine, by asking “Who art

thou, LORD ?” The display of this light would remind him of the glory of the Schechinah, that manifestation of the Angel Jehovah, which gave sanction to the law of his forefathers ; and the voice would greatly add to his conviction, that it was a revelation of the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, who “at sundry times, and in divers manners, had spoken” to his people Israel. It was possible, nay, very probable, that Saul was weighing in his mind the superior evidence of his faith above the claims of Him “whom the Jews had slain and hanged on a tree,” and who was therefore, “accursed.” (Deut. xxi. 23.)

The light and voice, manifestations which had shed so much glory and authority over the law of Moses, caused him to make the inquiry, as one filled with amazement and doubt, “Who art thou, Lord ?” He was conscious that he had not been a persecutor of the Lord God of his fathers, because he was zealous for His law and ordinances above all his fellows. He, whom he was persecuting with so bitter a spirit, had been “despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” And yet he salutes the person who was revealed in the glory of the Schechinah, and whom he was persecuting, with the title of Lord : “Who art thou, Lord ?” The answer ends his doubts, solves his question,

unteaches the learning of years, dissolves dearly cherished prejudices, convinces the zealot, and turns the fiery persecutor into one who tremblingly and submissively asks, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He did not stop to confess, with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God!" he did not say with the youthful Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;" but, as if eager that his confession and willingness to obey should be concentrated in his inquiry of what was now required of him, he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He had heard with his bodily ears the Bath-Col, the voice of the living God. He had seen with his bodily eyes the glorious manifestation of the Schechinah, which put him upon a level with the most celebrated and honoured of the law-givers of his fathers, and,—an honour far above any which had been vouchsafed to them,—he saw plainly and evidently the Lord, the Messiah, in his glorified and heavenly form, condescending to reprove, to teach, to appoint him to be one of his own teachers and apostles, a chosen vessel. That appointment, however, was to be made known to him on his arrival at Damascus. Other credentials than those which he was bearing from the Jewish high-priest to the synagogue at Damascus he was there to receive, higher in authority, opposite in their working,

but requiring of him the same exercise of activity and self-devotion which had been so peculiar a mark of his temper and pursuits.

A short pause seemed necessary for meditation and reflection, in order that the excess of his astonishment might subside, and his mind and heart be thereby more fitted to receive his exalted commission. Struck to the earth as he had been at the revelation of what he had heard and seen, the voice of God, the divine light, the presence of the glorified Redeemer, he was both speechless and without sight. In that state he continued three days, having been conducted to Damascus by his companions, who had not been unmoved witnesses of that part of the scene before them, in which they had been permitted to partake; for they only "heard the voice, but saw no man."

But the miracle attending Saul's conversion did not end here. The Lord leaves not his work unfinished. When he begins, he ceases not until all be accomplished. Accordingly, another proof of the Divine Revelation awaited him in Damascus. In that city dwelt a certain disciple, one of those who were the objects of his threatening and cruelty, named Ananias, to whom the Lord revealed the communication which he purposed to make known to the converted persecutor. This man was directed to go to the house of one

Judas, in which Saul had taken up his sojourn, and in which he had been favoured by a heavenly vision. That vision had portended Ananias as the person who had been commissioned to lay his hands upon Saul, in order that he might receive his sight. When, therefore, Ananias, thus commissioned, came to him and declared his appointment, and put his hands on him, and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost," his sight was restored, his conversion completed, and it only remained for him to be baptized. Without delay he received baptism, and the promise was fulfilled in the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then, as during his blindness, for three days he had remained fasting, he now received meat, and being thus strengthened and refreshed, he abode at Damascus certain days with the Disciples. The lion now laid down with the lamb; the persecutor became the guest and inmate of those against whom he had breathed out threatenings and death. It is an interesting evidence of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to promote unity and peace on earth, to contemplate Saul's sojourn at Damascus, mixing with, and living in harmony and concord among those, against whom he had borne

a commission to persecute them for being followers of that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he now acknowledged to be the Lord, and whose Apostle he was henceforth to be, “to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel ; and to suffer great things for his name’s sake.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A.D. 35-40.

ACTS IX. 19, to end.

The first public Preaching of Saul.—His Return to Jerusalem.—Peter's Visit to the Provinces.—Extension of the Gospel.—Cessation of the First General Persecution.

SAUL had sojourned with the Disciples at Damascus but for a very short period, when he received a divine intimation to proceed into Arabia. (A.D. 35.) As his Divine Master, before entering upon his public ministration, retired under the influence of the Spirit into the wilderness to watch and pray, so was Saul directed by the same Spirit to withdraw from the scenes both of his former persecutions and recent conversion, before he fully and openly commenced his ministerial office. This he did not as the result of worldly calculations, or at the suggestion of human wisdom; for he himself states in his Epistle to the Galatians, (i. 16, 17,) "I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me; but I went into Arabia." His instruction had

been from the Spirit, he needed not, therefore, human teaching; his commission was derived immediately from the Divine Head of the Church, it was not necessary he should receive his credentials from men.

But as his commission is one peculiar, and totally distinct from the ordinary operations and appointments provided for by the plain rules and general directions of the Holy Spirit, in which the agency of man is employed, we are not to consider this dispensing with the common methods, as any authority for our claiming a similar exemption for ourselves. There has been but one Saul of Tarsus converted into Paul the Apostle. His manner of conversion and his apostolic appointment, therefore, must ever stand alone peculiar to himself, forming no model by which any ordinary Christian can expect either to be appointed to the ministerial office, or called from the darkness of sin to the light of the glorious Gospel.

In Arabia he abode three years. During that period Aretas, king of Arabia, and father of the wife of Herod Antipas, whom he had repudiated for his brother Philip's wife, having defeated Herod and engaged in war with the Romans, made an irruption into Syria and possessed himself of the city of Damascus. Vitellius the

Roman governor, who had received commands from his master Tiberius to bring Aretas dead or alive to him, had marched out against him; but on hearing of the Emperor's death (A.D. 37) he led back his troops, and thus afforded the Arabian king an opportunity of taking the city, and placing it under the command of a deputy. Damascus was held by him when Saul returned unto it from his three years' sojourn in Arabia. And now commences his public ministration. (A.D. 38.)

During his seclusion in Asia he had, doubtless, been sedulously employed in searching the Scriptures, and storing up, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a magazine of spiritual armour with which to resist the enemies of the Gospel, and maintain and advance the cause of truth. He had no sooner returned to Damascus than, using his former privilege as a Jewish teacher, which entitled him to enter their synagogues, "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he was the Son of God." His appearance and manner of preaching excited much surprise and discussion; and the question was, "Is not this he that destroyed them who called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief-priests?" Nothing influenced by this

he increased the more in strength, and with his powerful arguments confounded the Damascene Jews, proving Jesus of Nazareth—him whom he had before persecuted—to be very Christ.

Unable to resist the cogency of his proofs and the fervour of his preaching, the Jews, like those at Jerusalem, had recourse to violence. And now did he who had not spared others, but had persecuted them even unto death, sparing neither age nor sex, find himself visited with the same kind of cruel rancour and persecution. His first public preaching commenced that series of trials and sufferings, which terminated only with his death. “They who take the sword shall perish by the sword;” and they who persecute others shall in turn endure persecution: at least it was so with Saul. He had not been many days in Damascus preaching Jesus, before “the Jews took counsel to kill him;” and so well had they arranged their purpose to destroy him, by watching the gates of the city day and night to prevent his escape, that it was with difficulty he eluded their vigilance, supported as they were by the soldiery of the garrison. His own account of this, his first escape from the danger which had beset him for preaching Jesus, is thus stated to the Corinthians (2nd, xi. 32, 33): “In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king, kept the city of

the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me ; and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.”

Having thus escaped he proceeded to Jerusalem, whence three years before he had gone forth bent on destruction, and inflated by zeal for the tradition of his forefathers. Many circumstances had conspired to prevent the Disciples in Jerusalem from hearing of his conversion ; and it was necessary for him to shew himself openly amongst them, as one not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. But we need not wonder that the remembrance of his former conduct caused the Disciples to be afraid of him, so that they should distrust his sincerity. Their fear and distrust were at length overcome by the interposition of Barnabas, who had before signalized his devotion to Christian principles by disposing of an estate for the common use of all the disciples. Whether he had heard of the events at Damascus from Ananias, or he had been an eye-witness of them, we know not ; but in the full spirit of Christian love, which thinketh no evil, he brought Saul unto the Apostles, who were then in Jerusalem, and told them of his miraculous conversion, divine appointment to the ministry, and the effects of his preaching at Damascus. This quieted all their suspicions ;

and henceforth he became established in the Church, and held communion with its leaders, mixing with and accompanying them in their goings out and their comings in. It was on this occasion that he saw James the Lord's brother, who was Bishop of Jerusalem, and abode with Peter (as he tells us, Galatians i. 18, 19,) fifteen days. The rest of the Apostles would appear to have been absent from Jerusalem, as besides these two he saw none other of them.

But his visit to Jerusalem was not passed in inactivity. Wisely, however, and with that prudent judgment which forms so distinguished a feature in his conduct, his exertions were made not among his own countrymen, but amongst the Grecians; that is, the Hellenistic Jews, the same class of persons whom Stephen had so fearlessly disputed with. The prejudices of his own countrymen might have been stronger against him, because of his defection from their party, than even against the other Apostles; whilst his accomplishments in general literature rendered him a more fitting and more able disputant against the Grecians than any other of his fellow-ministers, whose superior he greatly was in human learning. He might also have selected the Grecians as objects of his preaching, to evince his sincerity to the Disciples, because they had for-

merly been his associates, with whom he had been joined in the persecution and murder of Stephen.

But Saul's exertions and boldness in preaching the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem, in the very place where he had three years before persecuted his followers, and against those persons with whom he had on that occasion coalesced, served only to excite the rage of the Grecians belonging to the synagogue of the Libertines so greatly, that "they went about to slay him." This compelled him to leave Jerusalem; and so careful were the brethren of his preservation, that they gave him safe conduct to Cæsarea Philippi, in the north of Judea, and thence sent him forth to his native city, Tarsus, by way of Syria and Cilicia. (Gal. i. 21.)

About this period Peter began a progress through the Holy Land, visiting those places in which the Word of God had been established, either by the preaching of John and himself, or of Philip and others, of whom there is no account handed down to us. Four years before this, in company with John, he had gone forth with a commission from the rest of the Apostles to Samaria, upon the conversion of several of its inhabitants by the preaching of Philip the Deacon; and their visitation had been followed by the admission of many converts into the Christian Church.

We have no account how long these two pillars were absent from Jerusalem, neither what events occurred during their absence or after their return, until the sudden appearance of Saul amongst them, and the result of his “speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputing with the Grecians.” But though we have no account of this, we read that the departure of Saul was followed by that of Peter; who, in his zeal to bring others into the fold of his Heavenly Master, as well as to strengthen those of his brethren who had already been converted, went forth and traversed all quarters of the land of Palestine. Amongst other places he visited Lydda, where there was already a congregation of believers. Lydda is situated at about two-thirds of the distance between Jerusalem and Joppa. It was called Diospolis, or the City of Jupiter, by the Greeks, and was an exceedingly learned and celebrated place, contiguous to the rich and pleasant district of Saron, which lay between it and the nearest seaport town to Jerusalem and Joppa. In this place was laid a suffering child of mortality, by name Eneas, who had been confined to his bed eight years sick with the palsy. In the exercise of the gift of the Spirit, which enabled the Apostles to work miracles, Peter spake to him in the name of Jesus Christ, and he who was bed-ridden and

palsied arose from his sick prison, active and whole. The same Spirit which eight years before had caused one who had been a cripple from his mother's womb, at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple at Jerusalem, to leap up, and stand, and walk, by the word of Peter and John, now at Lydda, by the word of the same Peter, restored strength and soundness to one sick of the palsy. And, as in the former instance, many who beheld the miracle were convinced of the truth of the Holy Child Jesus, and became his followers, so in this "all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him that was healed, and turned unto the Lord."

Whilst the Apostle was sojourning at Lydda, an event had occurred at Joppa which affected with grief the Christians residing in that place. There had lived amongst them one eminent for works of charity and deeds of love. Her name was Tabitha, or Dorcas. This woman, of whom it is recorded she "was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did," fell sick and died; and her death was greatly lamented by the people. The report of Peter's being at the neighbouring town of Lydda, and of the miracle he had wrought there, reached the mourners in their affliction, who sent two of their company to intreat him without delay to come to them. There was no backwardness in the Apostle. The example of

his Heavenly Master, under similar circumstances, had often drawn forth his admiration, and the words which had been addressed to himself by the lake of Tiberias, when he received his re-institution to the apostolic office, which he had lost by his denial of his Master on the eve of the crucifixion, burned within his breast, to feed his lambs, and made him desirous to weep with them who wept, and rejoice with those who joyed. He went down. A mournful but interesting group—for real sorrow is always interesting—presented itself to his notice in the upper room, where the honoured dead was laid.

It is some encouragement to those who strive in their earthly pilgrimage to lessen the burdens and relieve the distresses of others, to know that their labours of love will be had in remembrance by those who have shared in their beneficence, when they have rested from their labours. Dorcas was no more, but her bier was surrounded by the widows whom she had comforted, and the naked whom she had clothed. How different was the conduct of this group from that which thronged the death-chamber of the youthful daughter of Jairus! In one were confusion and tumult; in the other, grateful affection and decent sorrow. And as the Saviour put forth the minstrels who made the throng and tumult, so now the Apostle

put forth those who were weeping round the dead, that, as Elisha with the Shunammite's son, (2 Kings iv. 33,) he might be alone from human observation, but not sequestered from, nor without power from heaven. He kneeled down, he prayed, and his prayer was heard; for when he turned towards "the body and said, Tabitha, arise!" the dead "opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up." The command had gone forth, Return; and the spirit, which had lately left its frail but beauteous tenement, did return to animate again the earthly body. Glad was the sound which proclaimed to the saints, and widows, and necessitous, that their benevolent friend was again alive, to be to them as she had already been, active to relieve their wants and compassionate their sorrows; and full of power was the lesson taught by this miracle to the inhabitants of Joppa and its neighbourhood, many of whom henceforth believed in the Lord. Joppa is called, in the Old Testament, Japho, belonging to the tribe of Dan, and was celebrated for being the place whence the materials for the building of Solomon's Temple were conveyed to Jerusalem. It is now called Jaffa, a town rendered notorious by the conduct of Napoleon Buonaparte.

Honoured as the Apostle must have been amongst them, as the instrument of God for the

good of his creatures, we do not find him puffed up by presumption nor vain in his own strength ; for it is related of him, that his tarrying at Joppa was in the house of one Simon, a tanner. It is not for nothing that this, to us apparently trivial, circumstance is recorded. The trade of tanner was held in so great contempt among the Jews, that the omitting to mention it before marriage rendered the marriage void. When, therefore, we read of Peter's residence in the house of a tanner, we are admonished of his humility, which, even at a period when he was held in the highest honour and esteem, led him to cast aside all proud distinctions, and, like his lowly Master, to seek to dwell with the despised ones of the earth.

The fire of the first general persecution had been now kept alive for five years ; and although much of its intensity had abated by the conversion of Saul, it did not become extinguished until after Peter's visit to Joppa. About that time was issued the nefarious edict of Caligula, through his deputy Petronius, which turned the attention of the Jews from the sect of the Nazarenes, to the expression of their universal hatred and abhorrence of the profanation threatened against their Temple. The edict was, to place the statue of the Roman Emperor in the Holy of Holies—an abomination which excited the most earnest depre-

cation of the people, and their most urgent solicitations for its avoidance. Thus the Roman power which they had used as an instrument to effect the crucifixion of Jesus Christ became, in turn, their plague, and under Providence the means of staying, however unintentionally, the first general or Jewish persecution. (A.D. 40.)

The cessation of this fiery trial was followed by a beautiful calm, in which, like a tree planted by the watercourses, the Church of Christ flourished luxuriantly. It was no longer, as at the commencement of the persecution, limited to Jerusalem. The grain of mustard had taken root, and was now spreading its branches far and wide, becoming a tree planted for the healing of the nations. Well might the sacred historian thus speak of the peace, prosperity, and character of the Gospel Church :—" Then had the Churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified ; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

CHAPTER IX.

A.D. 40-42.

ACTS X. XI. to 25.

The Conversion of the Devout Gentiles, or Proselytes of the Gate, by Peter at Cæsarea. — Reception of the Gentiles at Antioch. — The Mission of Barnabas. — Saul accompanies him from Tarsus to Antioch, where the Disciples are first called Christians.

THE cessation of the first general persecution was followed by another and very important epoch in the infant Church of Christ, which, for the last five or six years, had gone on in defiance of the most violent opposition, increasing in numbers and developing as well the purity of its doctrines as the frame-work of its building. The descent of the Holy Spirit had stamped it with a divine authority, and filled its appointed agents with power and wisdom equal to all exigencies, and sufficient for all things necessary to its complete edification, as a perfect system of faith, adequate in its means of grace to fit and prepare the fallen race of man, by its adaptation and practice, for the unspeakable glories of heaven. The appointment of Deacons next serves as an index to the

mode of its government and constitution of its officers ; whilst the mission of Peter and John, by direction of the other Apostles, to Samaria, to confirm the disciples who had been converted by the ministry of Philip, evinces their order as superior to that of the Deacons, and thus establishes the fact of a diversity of rank and order in the Christian ministry.

The calling of Saul is another remarkable incident in the History of the Church ; whilst the preaching of Philip and others, and especially Peter, in the provinces of Judea, indicates the diffusion of the Gospel, according to the prediction of its Divine Author. The Gospel was first preached in Jerusalem, then in Samaria, and next in the Provinces. To the people, therefore, of the land of promise the message of glad tidings was still limited. The time was now drawing nigh when the name of the Son of David, who, in his descent from Ruth, a woman of Moab, united in one lineage both Jew and Gentile, was to be made known, not only to the race of Abraham, but to those who hitherto had been strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. Yet even in this there is a gradation of means set forth. The offer of salvation having been progressively made to the dwellers of Jerusalem, the people of Samaria, and to those scattered throughout the provinces, was now to be

made to the Gentiles, but not at first to the whole body indiscriminately.

There was a class of persons holding an intermediate station between the circumcised Jew and uncircumcised Gentile, who were called proselytes and devout men; and these were found not only in Jerusalem, but in every place where Jews resided. Amongst these we read of one Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, or cohort, which probably served as the life-guard of the Roman governor. He was “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, and gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always;” a description which corresponds with that of the proselytes of the gate—persons who, though not embracing the whole of the Mosaic Law, for they were not circumcised, were nevertheless allowed not only to dwell with Jews, but worship in the outer court of the Temple. Cornelius dwelt at Cæsarea, the seat of the Roman government in Judea, so called from a magnificent temple built there by Herod the Great, dedicated to Augustus Cæsar, his patron; in compliment of whom, also, he had given the name of Sebaste (the August) to another city.

To this devout centurion a revelation was made, probably at the time when he was offering the evening sacrifice; for we read that it was the

ninth hour of the day, that is about three o'clock of the afternoon of our time, the hour of the Jewish vespers. The purport of this revelation was not only to inform him that his prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God, but to direct him to send to Joppa to make inquiry for one Peter, who was lodging with one Simon, a tanner, in that place. Obedient to this direction he called two of his household servants together, with a devout soldier who constantly waited upon him, and having informed them of all that had happened to him, he despatched them to Joppa. On the following day about noon, the sixth hour of the Jewish day, Peter having, according to his custom, gone up upon the housetop to pray, fell into a trance. At this time the messengers of Cornelius were drawing nigh to the city. In this trance he saw a vision, which conveyed to him, by a symbolical representation thrice repeated, and suited to his present circumstances, an intimation that to the Gentiles also, henceforth was to be preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He had not recovered from the state of doubt as to the meaning of what he had seen, before the messengers of Cornelius arrived and inquired for him. Descending from the roof, or flat part of the house, by the monition of the Holy Spirit, he found the men, who declared to

him the object of their mission. Having received them with hospitality, he accompanied them on the following day to Cæsarea, attended by certain brethren from Joppa.

His entrance into the house of Cornelius was the first evidence of the effect of the vision upon Peter's changed views; for hitherto, as a Jew bound by the Mosaic Law, he was restrained from entering into the house of a Heathen or Gentile. When, therefore, he entered the house of Cornelius, and conversed with him, he gave a proof of the effect of the vision upon his heart and conduct; it was the first practical intimation of the breaking down of the middle wall of partition, and of the introduction of the universal working of that Gospel of peace, which was to be preached to all nations and to every creature. This purpose of Almighty God, which had been shadowed out by miracles, and prophecies, and signs both in heaven and in earth, was now beginning to be more plainly revealed; for already had the sign been given, not only of the redemption of all men by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but of the means of salvation both to Jew and Gentile, through the instrumentality of preaching.

In the patriarchal ages we read of Abimelech and others, not of the chosen seed, "who feared God and worked righteousness." Under the

Mosaic dispensation, not only were those who were strangers in the land allowed to dwell in Judea, but they were permitted to worship also in the outer court of the Temple. Naaman the Syrian, and therefore a Gentile, was cleansed from his leprosy ; the Shunamitish woman had her son restored to life ; and the woman of Canaan, the Roman centurion, and others who were Gentiles, were made recipients of the Saviour's compassionate power to heal and save. These were signs that Jehovah was the God, and Jesus Christ the Redeemer, not of the Jews only but of the Gentiles also.

It required, however, the interference of a miraculous influence to enlighten the minds even of the Apostles in respect of this great truth ; and not before a double revelation had been made, coincident in signification and co-operative in effect, did Peter publish the declaration of the abolition of exclusiveness in respect of the dispensation of grace ; and that, as the sun in the natural world goes forth to carry light to all nations, so the Sun of Righteousness was now risen, not only to throw the influence of his glory over Israel, but to diffuse the brightness of his shining over the Gentiles, and those who hitherto had sat in the darkness of the shadow of death. Nor was the evidence of this important and in-

teresting fact confined to the expression of words ; but as Peter spake and made it known, a confirmation of it was given by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and all who heard the word.

Thus, as at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the immediate followers of Jesus, the lately crucified and risen Saviour, and filled them with the gift of tongues ; so now at Cæsarea, the seat of the Roman power in Judea, the same Holy Spirit came down upon the Gentiles, and enabled them “to speak with tongues, and magnify God.” How exact and beautiful is this coincidence ! How plainly does it intimate that He, who blessed the chosen seed with his favouring protection, was not unmindful of the rest of the race of Adam, but that as He was the Creator, so also was He the Redeemer of all men. Another matter worthy of remark is recorded also in the account of the first-fruits of the Gentiles gathered into the Christian Church.

On Cornelius and his friends was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost ; but admission into the Church of Christ, or his kingdom on earth, had been appointed by the Saviour to be not by the Spirit only, but water and the Spirit. The outward sign, therefore, was still wanting to them ; the mode of admission appointed by the Saviour was necessary to be observed. It had been the

same with Saul on his conversion, and with all others, however miraculously called from darkness to light. Peter, therefore, remembering this, and “the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost,” required that the newly enlightened Gentiles should be baptized, according to his Divine Master’s intimation to Nicodemus, and direct charge to himself and the other Apostles.

This conversion (A.D. 40) forms another important epoch in the history of the Christian Church. It went far to dissolve the peculiarity of the claims of the Jews, to be considered exclusive partakers of the favour of God. But remarkable and significant as it was, there were yet at Jerusalem persons, even among those who were in close communion with the Church in that city, who contended with Peter for what he had done, accusing him, on his return from Cæsarea, after an absence of three years from Jerusalem, of inconsistency for eating with the Gentiles. This charge, however groundless and savouring of the exclusiveness of the Old Law, must be accepted as an evidence, that the primitive Christians did not look upon Peter either as impeccable or as their absolute superior; whilst the readiness with which he availed himself of

the opportunity, not only of vindicating his own conduct, but of declaring publicly and before them all the opening of the door of salvation to the uncircumcised, shews that he arrogated not to himself any supremacy over others. His defence was so satisfactory in allaying the scruples of all who heard him, that “ they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

Nor was the effect of Peter’s vision, and the subsequent events in Cæsarea, confined to the brethren at Jerusalem; it had its influence upon those who had been scattered abroad in the first general or Jewish persecution, and had gone from place to place “ preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.” After having traversed Judea and Samaria, some of them had travelled as far as Phenicia, a district to the north of Judea; others to Cyprus, a large island in the part of the Mediterranean Sea called the Levant; and others to Antioch, the capital of Syria, and the third city of the Roman empire. The latter were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, a district in Africa. As soon as they heard of the admission of the Roman Gentiles at Cæsarea into the Church by Peter, they followed his example, and at Antioch (A.D. 41) began to “ preach the Lord Jesus unto the Grecians;” and great effect attended their

preaching, for “the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”

The report of this second instance of the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles reached the Church at Jerusalem; and as its rulers had, on occasion of the conversion of the Samaritans by Philip, deputed Peter and John to go and confirm the new disciples, so did they now send Barnabas to Antioch to ascertain the truth of this report, and encourage the converts to persevere in the good work which had been so happily begun among them. His visit was not without joy to himself nor fruit to the Church; for so judiciously, and temperately, and persuasively did he discharge his mission, that “much people was added unto the Lord.”

This occupied him some time. Barnabas, we must remember, was he who sold a possession which he had in Cyprus, and laid the proceeds of it at the Apostles’ feet. He introduced Saul to the Church at Jerusalem, and is reported of as “a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and faith.” It appears that whilst he was at Antioch he recalled to his mind the various eminent qualifications of Saul, which might render him a most efficient coadjutor in the work he had now in hand. Accordingly (A.D. 42) he set out for

Tarsus, where Saul had been stationed ever since his flight from Jerusalem four years before, and “when he had found him he brought him unto Antioch.” There they remained together for a whole year, strenuously exerting themselves in the cause of their Divine Master. They not only “assembled themselves with the Church, but taught much people;” and they so conducted themselves and preached Christ as the Redeemer of all men, shewing his Gospel to be designed for the reception and benefit of all, without distinction of family or nation, that they who had hitherto by their enemies been designated, by way of reproach, Nazarenes, or Galileans, or the men of this way or sect, and by themselves saints, disciples, believers, and the church, by divine intimation received a designation which both pointed out their divine origin, and links them, as well in profession as name, with that of Him “of whom all the family in heaven and earth are named.” “The Disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (A.D. 42.)

CHAPTER X.

A.D. 43-45.

ACTS XII.

The Herodian Persecution.—Martyrdom of Saint James.—
The Dispersion of the Apostles.—The Deliverance of
Peter.—The Gospel of St. Mark.—Paul and Barnabas at
Jerusalem.—The Death of Herod.—Paul's Divine Ap-
pointment to be Apostle.—His return to Antioch, accom-
panied by Barnabas and Mark.

FOR a space of about three years the Church had enjoyed rest from persecution, during which period the door of salvation had been opened to the devout Gentiles both in Judea and in Asia. The spirit of persecution, however, had but slumbered, soon to be revived with renewed vigour. Jewish intolerance waited but the means and opportunity of exercising its unhallowed spirit, and both these were afforded to it in the beginning of the reign of Claudius Cæsar at Rome, and Herod Agrippa in Judea.

Herod Agrippa was the son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great. He was accordingly nephew to Herod Antipas, who put John the Baptist to death, and brother of Herodias,

whom that incestuous and bloody tetrarch had married. In early life his intimacy with Caius Caligula had so offended the Emperor Tiberius, that he caused him to be imprisoned. On the death of the emperor, his friend released him from prison, and with the title of king conferred upon him the tetrarchy of his uncle Philip, and afterwards, on the banishment of his uncle Antipas, added to him his territories. On the death of Caligula, the Emperor Claudius, who succeeded to the imperial purple, not only confirmed Agrippa in his government, but added to it the province which had been governed by Lysanias, with the title of King of Judea. His character is thus drawn by the Jewish historian Josephus:—
“He was a great zealot for the Mosaic Law, dwelling much at Jerusalem; and he was fond of all opportunities of obliging the Jews, as his grandfather Herod had been of pleasing strangers.”

Following, therefore, the cruel disposition of his family, and his desire to render himself popular amongst the Jews, he commenced a persecution of the Christians: “He stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church.” The consequence of this persecution was the dispersion of the Apostles, and the slaughter of James the brother of John, who at this time found the truth of his Master’s prophetic declaration (Matt. xx.

23), that "he should drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism."

In the former persecution which followed the death of Stephen, the Apostles had remained in the Holy City; and the affairs of the Church were under their joint management and superintendence. The time had not then come for their going forth into the world to "preach the Gospel to every creature."

Events had since occurred which shewed that their presence was no longer needed exclusively at Jerusalem, but they must set about fulfilling that part of their commission which directed them to "Go and teach all nations." And as on the former occasion the dispersion of the Disciples had redounded to the glory of their Master, by the conversion of many, so the departure of the Apostles was about to diffuse still more extensively that Gospel, of which they were the appointed stewards and ministers. The sword of persecution had before been glutted in the blood of common disciples; it now sought out nobler victims. Herod slew James the brother of John with the sword, as an enemy of the Roman power and obnoxious to the Mosaic Law. James, therefore, was the first of the Apostles, as Stephen was of the Disciples, who followed their Master unto death. That the Jews found pleasure in this

demolition of one of the pillars of the Christian Church, in this slaughter of one of the three most intimate of the Disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, who with his brother shared the name of Boanerges, the sons of thunder, is evident from the further progress of Herod's proceedings. He had been successful in his attempt upon one of the chief Apostles, and no mark of divine displeasure had followed the murder. He next proceeded to lay hands upon Peter, who had been so distinguished for his zeal and manifestation of the power of working miracles, impiously imagining if he were successful on him, his triumph over Jesus of Nazareth would be complete, and that pestilential heresy would be for ever destroyed. Having therefore seized Peter, he shut him up in prison under the keeping of sixteen soldiers. These were divided into fours, called quaternions, one of which kept watch, and was relieved in succession by the others. To two of each watch was the Apostle bound, for the custom was to fetter each arm of the prisoner and chain it to a guard. The purpose of Herod was not to put him immediately to death, but to reserve him for a public spectacle, to gratify the bloody passions of the people.

The time of Peter's apprehension was at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that period of the

year answering in the Christian Church to the season of Easter, in which, fourteen years before, his Divine Master had been betrayed and crucified; that is, after the celebration of the Passover. The expiration of that season was appointed for his public execution. But the malevolence of man was prevented by the gracious interposition of God, who heard the unceasing prayer of the Church made in his behalf. On the very night before the day appointed for his martyrdom, was sent the Angel of the Lord to deliver him. Heavily was he bound; closely was he watched. On either side of him was a soldier; before the prison door stood the two watchful sentinels; and a deep gloom enveloped the dungeon. Suddenly a supernatural light shone forth: the prisoner's sleep is disturbed by a blow from the angelic messenger, and a voice is heard, commanding him to arise up quickly. The chains fall from his arms, and he hears a further command to gird himself, and bind on his sandals, and cast his garment about him, and follow. There was no trepidation or confusion; all was quietly and regularly done as commanded: yet neither were the soldiers awoke from their sleep, nor was Peter entirely conscious of what was taking place, for he thought he saw a vision. In this state of mind he followed the angel past

the first and second ward, until they came to the outer iron gate that leadeth into the city. But that was no obstacle to their passing out, for spontaneously it opened at their approach. The same power which had loosened the fetters caused the iron gate to "open to them of its own accord."

Having passed along through one street to some distance from the prison, the angel vanished from the sight of the astonished Apostle, who, after a short suspense, coming to himself and finding where he was, became conscious of what had taken place. Then, after some consideration whither to betake himself, he proceeded to the house of Mary the mother of John Mark ; which appears to have been a rendezvous of the faithful, for there he found many assembled praying together for his deliverance. So hopeless were they, that with difficulty they believed the report of the damsel who waited at the outer gate, that Peter stood there knocking. At length when they opened the gate and saw him, indeed, standing before it, they were filled with astonishment. To them the Apostle declared the manner of his deliverance, and gave direction that they should report it unto James and the brethren. This was James, called the brother of our Lord, who was appointed head of the Church at Jerusalem at at this time, when the dispersion of the Apostles,

who had hitherto conjointly superintended it, rendered such an appointment necessary. To him, therefore, as the overseer or bishop of the Christian Church at Jerusalem, Peter directs the message of his deliverance to be reported. It does not appear how long he remained there after his escape from prison, but it is a fair presumption that he lost no time in quitting Jerusalem, for the rage of Herod knew no bounds when he discovered what had taken place; and certain it is, that he who caused the guards, who were his own soldiers, to be put to death, would not have spared him whose escape had so signally baffled his scheme of popular cruelty. The sacred historian has not recorded to what place Peter betook himself for safety.

There are many and conflicting conjectures, but the most probable one is that during the remainder of the Herodian persecution he sojourned at Rome, where he would be protected from the vengeance of Herod, as well because of the favour he might derive from the influence of Cornelius, as from the general polity of the Roman government. He was accompanied by John, surnamed Mark. Nor was he entirely inactive during that sojourn; not that he planted a Church at Rome, as some vainly pretend; but he appears to have dictated to his companion that nar-

rative of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ which bears the title of the Gospel of St. Mark. That Gospel bears evident traces of Roman characters, and is remarkable for the omission of various circumstances nearly affecting the honour of Peter, and for the introduction of others which record his weaknesses and shame. As, therefore, the Gospel of St. Matthew was written during the first persecution (A.D. 38), for the benefit of the Jewish converts, to whom alone the word had then been preached; so now, in the second or Herodian persecution (A.D. 43), when to the devout Gentiles also the message of salvation had been spread by Peter, under his guidance and dictation was published for the use of the Romans, the masters of the heathen world, and of whom was Cornelius, the first-fruits of Gentile conversion, the GOSPEL OF ST. MARK.

The reign of Claudius Cæsar was remarkable for a series of famine in various parts of the world. A prophecy of this was given by Agabus, who was one of the prophets who had gone down about this time from Jerusalem to Antioch. Admonished by his warning, the Christians who dwelt in Antioch contributed according to their means, in order that they might be able to send relief to their brethren in Judea. Accordingly (A.D. 44) they appointed Barnabas and Saul to be messengers of their bounty.

In his Epistle to the Galatians (i. 19), St. Paul tells us that he then saw none of the Apostles, save James the Lord's brother, who, as we have seen, had been appointed head of the Church in Jerusalem on the dispersion of the other Apostles by the Herodian persecution.

This year (A.D. 44) is remarkable for the death of Herod Agrippa. The reign of his cruelty was soon cut short. After the flight of Peter he quitted Jerusalem for Cæsarea, the metropolis of the Roman power in Judea, for the purpose of celebrating games in honour of his patron Claudius. At this place, and on that occasion, he received an embassy from the people of Tyre and Sidon, who having incurred his displeasure came to sue for peace. Arrayed in gorgeous robes, which according to Josephus, from their splendour, afforded an opportunity to his sycophants to compliment him as a Deity, and seated on his throne, he harangued the embassy with such eloquence that the people flattered his pride by comparing his voice to that of a God. Gross as was the sycophancy, and impious the comparison, he yet received them as truth, and became vainly puffed up in his ambitious heart. But the swelling pride had no sooner taken possession of his thoughts, than there came a withering blight. The Assyrian monarch in his hour

of festal grandeur beheld the warning writing, which told him of the impending ruin of himself and kingdom; and Herod was struck in the moment of his impious vanity with a mortal disease, so that he was carried out of the assembly, in which he had been deified, writhing with torture. He, the cruel persecutor, whose sword was wet with the blood of martyrs—he, whose baffled cruelty was savagely avenged on his own soldiers, died a painful and humiliating death; which served to shew in its strongest colours the contrast of selfish exaltation with mortal weakness: “he was eaten up by worms.” The portion of the dead became his in life. Worms that fatten on corruption in the grave, banqueted on the living body until it became a loathsome carcase. His death stayed the persecution (A.D. 44): and again “the word of God grew and multiplied.”

It was in the following year (A.D. 45) that Saul, during his sojourn in the Holy City, on his mission with the charitable gifts from Antioch, was favoured with a vision whilst praying in the Temple, in which was conveyed to him from God, (2 Cor. xii. 2; Acts xxii. 17–22,) an intimation of his future scenes of usefulness among the Gentiles. It might be that he was purposing to tarry in Jerusalem, filled with a desire of converting its inhabitants, and bringing them to the know-

ledge of that truth against which he had formerly been so bitter an enemy, but of which he had now become a most zealous and powerful advocate. The vision dissolved such hopes, if he had ever entertained them, and sent him back to Antioch with an appointment to the Apostolic office, not from man but from Christ himself. He, therefore, departed from Jerusalem a second time, accompanied by Barnabas and John Mark, who also had in the interval returned from Rome, to which city it is supposed he accompanied Peter in his flight, and where under his dictation he wrote the Gospel which bears his name. The death of Herod and the consequent staying of the persecution might have induced him to return to the Holy City; from which he was taken by Saul and Barnabas, to be their companion in the mission, which they were about to undertake for the further progress of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XI.

A.D. 45-48.

ACTS XIII. XIV.

Antioch in Syria.—The Mission of Barnabas and Saul.—Seleucia, Salamis, Paphos.—The Conversion of Sergius Paulus, the first Idolatrous Convert.—Paul.—Perga in Pamphylia.—Antioch in Pisidia.—Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, in Lycaonia.—Paul and Barnabas return.—Attalia in Pamphylia.—Completion of the First Evangelical Journey.

THE Church at Antioch appears to have been at this period numerous and blessed with several distinguished characters. It was the scene of many important events, and from it went forth many of those Missions of Grace which spread abroad the message of glad tidings, and brought many from the wilderness of darkness to the glorious light of salvation and truth. It was at Antioch the Disciples were first called Christians. It was from Antioch Saul was sent forth as an accredited Apostle. He had hitherto preached in the synagogues by right alone of his original appointment among the Jews as a teacher—so that hitherto he may be regarded as inferior to the other Apostles,

who had derived their commission from Christ himself. During, however, his last sojourn in Jerusalem that inferiority had been removed, by his having received, whilst in a trance in the Temple, a direct commission from heaven, which placed him upon a level with “the chiefest of the Apostles.” This divine appointment was outwardly confirmed amongst men, by the Church at Antioch acting under the immediate direction of the Holy Ghost. For although he needed not such confirmation from men, yet we must consider that the Most High God, in all his dispensations of the means of grace for the benefit of his fallen creatures, not only adapts the means to human comprehension, but requires that they shall be conducted by human agency according to rules of his own appointment, suited to the peculiar circumstances of his people. Hence, although Saul had been converted by a peculiar miracle—had three years given him for meditation and concealment—and had derived his appointment to the apostolic office by an express revelation from heaven, yet he went not forth as an Apostle—the Apostle of the Gentiles—until he had also obtained the sanction of the Church to which he had attached himself, and received from it, together with Barnabas, the commission to perform the work whereunto they had been called by the

Holy Spirit. He was ordained, therefore, by the Church at Antioch as its Apostle to the Gentiles, as well in conformity with the institution already established, as that this outward commission, from so distinguished a place, might impart an authority to him in the estimation of those, with whom he was hereafter about to be engaged in the holy work of the ministry.

Antioch was the capital of Syria, a country held in estimation by the Jews, as occupying a kind of middle position between the impurity of Gentile nations and the believers of their own chosen land. Built by Seleucus, the conqueror, one of the most successful of the generals of Alexander the Great, but who, nevertheless, in the pride of success was assassinated by his ally Keraunus (B.C. 280), it was greatly celebrated for its strength, and the number of Jews who resided in it and had a famous school of learning there. It was distant about twelve miles from the sea; and was altogether very favourably situated to be the centre of those labours, by which Saul and Barnabas made known the way of life to so many nations of the earth.

From this place they went forth to conquer the strongholds of Satan, not, indeed, like Alexander and Seleucus, for "the weapons of their warfare were not carnal:" and the first place they

visited on this their first apostolical journey was Seleucia, a port of some importance in the Mediterranean Sea ; from which they sailed over to Cyprus, an island memorable in profane history, as being supposed to be the peculiar residence of the goddess Venus. At Salamis, a town built by the exile Teucer in the eastern point of the island, and therefore lying nearest to the point of the main land from which they had sailed, "they preached the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews," having John Mark also for their minister. They then proceeded throughout the island until they came to Paphos on the western coast, where they fell in with a celebrated impostor named Bar-jesus or Elymas, a Jew, who pretended to sorcery, in the suite of the Roman deputy Sergius Paulus. The deputy is represented as being a prudent man, who, having heard of the arrival of the Apostles, sent for them in order that he might have an opportunity of hearing the Word of God. His purpose alarmed the fears of the sorcerer, lest his imposition should be detected, and he himself exposed to disgrace and shame. Accordingly he interposed his influence to prevent the deputy from listening to their preaching ; but his attempt failed, for when they had been admitted into his presence, Saul, directed by the Holy Spirit, denounced his impos-

ture and iniquities, and proclaimed upon him the sentence of temporary blindness, which was immediately executed. The sight of this miracle so wrought upon the heart of the deputy, already inclined to seek for instruction, that, "astonished at the doctrine of the Lord, he believed." He was the first of the pagan or idolatrous Gentiles, who turned from idols to serve the living God.

As Cornelius, the devout centurion, was the first among Gentile proselytes to admit the truth of the Gospel at Cæsarea, the seat of the Roman empire in Judea, so Sergius Paulus the Roman proconsul of Cyprus, the island of Idæan Jove and the Paphian Venus, was the first among Gentile idolaters to receive the message of glad tidings, and become a follower of Him, whom fifteen years before Pontius Pilate had tamely given up, in spite of his own conviction of his innocence, to the Jews to be crucified.

The conversion of this governor completes the series of steps in the publication of the Gospel, and closes the circle which had been appointed for the manifestation of Jesus Christ, as the Saviour not of the Jews but of the Gentiles also. That voice which went forth from his Apostles at Jerusalem (A.D. 29), echoed at Samaria by Philip (A.D. 34), next listened to in the provinces among the Jews (from A.D. 34 to 38), and lastly at

Cæsarea accepted by Cornelius and other devout Gentile proselytes of the gate (A.D. 40), was now heard at Paphos (A.D. 45), free from all restriction, fulfilling the call which appeals to all, who died in Adam, to seek for life in Christ.

This gradation of the preaching of the word and the spreading of the truth, forms a striking feature in the developing of that purpose of Divine Grace, by which "God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." And as the leading converts in this unfolding of the divine purpose towards the Gentiles were persons in exalted stations, a proof was given of his wisdom and universal love: of his wisdom, in making human power subserve his gracious purpose, and of his love, in making men of all ranks recipients of his bounty.

Sergius Paulus was the first-fruits of idolatrous conversion; the first-fruits of the exercise of Saul's miraculous powers; and from him, triumphant victor in the lists of combat, and carrying off as it were the *spolia opima*, he took that, as an earnest of future trophies in the Christian warfare, the name of his captive, being henceforth called Paulus or Paul; and in all the subsequent narrative of the sacred historian, taking precedence of his fellow-apostle Barnabas. As a proof of this, we find in the next account of their proceedings mention made of

“Paul and his company,” not as before, of Barnabas and Saul.

At the conclusion of this year (A.D. 45) they passed from Paphos to Perga, a town in Pamphylia, which is a district of Asia Minor lying along the coast of the Mediterranean, to the east of Cilicia. At this place their minister John departed from them, having forsaken them at the prospect of the dangers and difficulties which awaited their purposed progress. He returned to Jerusalem, and is generally supposed, from other histories, to have subsequently gone into Africa and founded the Church at Alexandria.

Paul and his company proceeded from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia, situated to the north of Pamphylia, and consequently further in the interior of the country. Here (A.D. 46), in their synagogue on the Sabbath-day, Paul preached to the Jews and those that feared God, and set before them not only the history of the chosen seed, which shewed his intimacy with the Jewish Scriptures, but also the leading events in the life and death of Him who was that seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. This address may be considered as the last direct and peculiar appeal, he ever made publicly to his countrymen the Jews. It displays great devotion to their interest, and is a beautiful epitome of the

history of their nation and the progress of the purpose of the Most High, in setting forth Jesus the seed of David to be, according to the promise of God, a Saviour unto Israel. Its concluding words contain an awful caution. But neither his earnestness, nor the statement of historical facts, nor arguments drawn from them, nor the mention of the sacrifice of the Saviour, nor the warning which he so emphatically addressed to them, appears to have had a proportionate effect. He was requested, indeed, to repeat the same words during the week, or on the next Sabbath-day; and some there were whose attention had been awakened, and in whose hearts an interest had been excited, for they followed the Apostles out of the synagogue and received encouragement from them to "continue in the grace of God." Still on the next Sabbath-day, when almost the whole city were gathered together to hear them, they were not permitted to declare the Word of God without molestation. The old leaven of Jewish malice was stirred up, and made them grudge that the Gentiles should be partakers of the grace of God. Accordingly, the Jews endeavoured to refute and contradict the teaching and doctrine of the Apostles, who, unintimidated by their opposition, fearlessly pronounced the sen-

tence of rejection against the Jews, and the offering of the terms of grace to the Gentiles.

Gladly was this message received by the Gentiles, "who glorified the Word of the Lord," for the purport of that word so coincided with their disposition of heart and mind, that they readily embraced the offer and enrolled themselves, like well-disciplined and faithful soldiers, under the banner of the Captain of their salvation. Their example was not lost upon others, for not only did they in the city believe, who had heard the word preached; but so powerful was the lesson, and so zealous were these new recruits of Christianity, that like a conquering army, the Word of the Lord went forth throughout all the region, winning new victories and greatly augmenting the ranks of Him whose banner was set forth as the ensign of the nations.

But glorious as was this triumph of the faith both in Antioch and the surrounding district, the evil malice of the Jews stirred them up to use their influence with certain persons of distinction and authority, by whose interference and the persecution thus excited, Paul and Barnabas were at length driven violently away from the scene of their faithful zeal and persevering love. In their expulsion they remembered the injunction originally given to the Twelve by their Master (Mark

vi. 11)—they shook off the dust of their feet as a testimony against their oppressors, and passed on to Iconium, which is situated on the extreme borders of Pisidia, Galatia, and Phrygia.

The abrupt departure of these messengers of glad tidings in nowise damped the zeal, or faith of their proselytes, for “they were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost,”—neither did it cause themselves to relax in the publication of the same message in Iconium; in which city, as in Antioch, success attended their preaching, so that “a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed.” But the same successful preaching of the word in Iconium produced the same ebullition of malice on the part of the Jews, and was attended, after some time, with the same result—the expulsion of the Apostles from their scene of usefulness, in consequence of an assault made upon them both by Jews and Gentiles, and the rulers of the city also. Lystra, another city of Lycaonia, received them. At this place the power of working miracles was again manifested in behalf of a powerless cripple, who, at the command of Paul, stood upright on his feet, and leaped, and walked.

The district which witnessed their present labours was the scene of the fabulous visit of the heathen gods Jupiter and Mercury, before the

deluge of Deucalion. The names of Jupiter and Mercury were familiar to the people of Lystra, to whom the sight of this miracle appears immediately to have suggested the idea, that "the gods had come down among them in the likeness of men." Impressed with this notion they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul, because he was the chief speaker, Mercury, who was the god of eloquence. The priest of Jupiter also attempted to offer unto them sacrifice, and was with difficulty restrained from persevering in his purpose.

Their sojourn in Lystra was but for a short period, for the zeal of its inhabitants towards them was soon converted into a contrary spirit, affording us another and important instance how dangerous is hasty zeal, uncertain as the passing breeze, and that they who trust to popular favour, place their dependence upon that which is baseless as the fabric of a vision. The Apostles frequently proved the instability of popular zeal. Not only at Antioch and Iconium had they experienced this; but even at Lystra they who had been eager to offer divine honours in token of their admiration, within a few days, on the instigation of certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, became equally zealous for their death, by stoning him as a malefactor whom they had before hailed as the god Mercury.

The scene which had been so cruelly acted upon Stephen at Jerusalem, and in which he had been himself a participator, was now reacted upon himself, but not unto death; for though he had been stoned in the streets, and dragged by the tumultuous populace to be thrown outside of the gates, where he was left for dead, yet as the brethren stood around him he rose up, restored by a miraculous power as from the dead, and returned with them into the city. On the following day he quitted Lystra, and with Barnabas went to another large and populous Lycaonian city called Derbe, in which place and the surrounding region they resumed their mission, and preached the Gospel.

Derbe was the extent of their first evangelical journey (A.D. 47). They now retraced their steps, and, undismayed by the cruel and ungrateful treatment which they had before experienced, they revisited Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and (shewing them) that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

Before they took their departure from these cities they gave other testimonies of their affection for the brethren, by appointing and ordaining fitting persons to preside over and manage their se-

veral churches. It was during this progress that Saul commenced his intimacy with his beloved disciple Timothy, who “fully knew the persecutions and afflictions which came unto him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra.” (2 Timothy, iii. 11.)

Renewing their journey from Antioch, Paul and Barnabas passed through Pisidia and Pamphylia, and in their progress preached the word in Perga, where John Mark had left them more than a year before, deterred by the prospect of those dangers which they had so painfully and yet so courageously undergone. Following the line of the coast they came to Attalia, from which, instead of passing by land through Cilicia on which it borders, they sailed to Antioch in Syria, from which place they had taken their departure about three years before. In that city, as they had been sent forth on their evangelical journey by the Church established there, so on their return in safety they gathered the Church together, and rendered them an account “of all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”

CHAPTER XII.

A.D. 49-51.

ACTS XV. XVI. XVII. to 10.

Discussion at Antioch concerning Circumcision.—The Mission of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem.—The first General Council.—The Decree of James and the Apostles.—The Return of Paul and Barnabas.—Their Sojourn at Antioch.—Their Separation.—Paul's Visitation of the Churches in Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia.—The Night Vision at Troas.—Call to visit Macedonia.—The Introduction of the Gospel into Europe.—Philippi and Thessalonica.—The first Epistle written by Paul, that to the Galatians.

AFTER their return Paul and Barnabas remained at Antioch, recruiting themselves from the fatigue of their journey and trials, and edifying the believers, until the harmony of the Church at that place, which contained so many illustrious Christians, and which may be considered the metropolis of the uncircumcision as Jerusalem was of the circumcision, was broken in upon (A.D. 49) by certain persons who came down from the latter city, and introduced among the brethren the question of circumcision as an indispensable con-

dition of salvation. It is not improbable that Peter was at Antioch at this time, and that he favoured this dangerous error ; for, in the Epistle to the Galatians, (ii. 11, 12,) St. Paul writes, “ When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles ; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.” But however this may be, it is quite clear that the Judaizing Christians were resisted by Paul and Barnabas, “ who had no small dissension and disputation with them.” Neither their reasoning nor authority, however, availed to settle the question, for the false teachers remained so tenacious of their views of the necessity of those adhering to all the Law of Moses, who had even been baptized into Christ Jesus, and they so disquieted the minds of the Church at Antioch, that it was at length determined to send a deputation to the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem about this question. Paul and Barnabas, and others, among whom was Titus (Gal. ii. 1), were sent on this embassy, which gave occasion to the sitting of the first general council, the proceedings of which are full of importance, not only in respect of the decision itself, but the order of its discussions. It was presided over by

James, who had been appointed Bishop of Jerusalem on occasion of the Herodian persecution, when the rest of the Apostles were scattered abroad in flight.

They had now returned, and as Paul and Barnabas had been ordained Apostles, the original number of Twelve was again complete, having been impaired by the death of James the brother of John, and the appointment of the other James, sometimes called the brother of our Lord, and sometimes the son of Alpheus, to be Bishop of Jerusalem. Various were the opinions advanced in this council until Peter rose up, and, retracting as it were the errors into which he had fallen at Antioch, declared his opinion against the necessity of imposing the Mosaic yoke upon the Gentiles, who had been placed by the Holy Ghost on the same level with themselves. This noble retraction of his former error had its due weight upon the Council; for no sooner had Paul and Barnabas been in consequence called into the assembly, and had given an account of "the miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them," than James, the President of the Council, delivered his opinion also, that as the Lord had shewn his purpose, in the conversion of Cornelius, to visit the Gentiles and take out of them a people for his name according to

the intimations of prophecy, it was not right to trouble those among the Gentiles who were turned unto God any further with this question. This opinion, confirming as it did the position advanced by Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, was adopted by the Council, who chose out Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, to accompany them on their return to Antioch, and confirm by speech the decree conveyed in the letter, written by the Apostles and Elders and brethren at Jerusalem to their brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia.

Paul and Barnabas delivered the epistle to the assembled Church at Antioch, “who rejoiced for the consolation.” Their joy was because of their being protected from a heavy yoke; their consolation, that of being admitted and recognised as brethren, and fellow-heirs of the Gospel, by those who were the pillars of the truth. Their joy and consolation also were increased by the exhortation and brotherly affection towards them of Judas and Silas, the deputed messengers of the primitive Church at Jerusalem. Indeed so great and lively was the interest which Silas took in them, that he refused to return with Judas, choosing rather to remain at Antioch, a witness of, and fellow-labourer in, those exertions of Paul and Barnabas; by which in conjunction with many

others, they continued "teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord."

But Antioch, however important, was a sphere much too contracted for the labours of those two zealous Apostles. At the suggestion of Paul, who, like his Great Master, delighted to go about doing good, they determined to revisit those whom, in their first evangelical journey, they had converted to the faith of Jesus. On this occasion, however, as if to be a perpetual memorial of the necessity of every one taking heed lest he fall, and to shew that even the plenary influence of the Holy Spirit did not annihilate the free agency of man, a dissension broke out between them, and a sudden fit of anger caused them to separate. It was occasioned by the partiality of Barnabas for his nephew John Mark, who had incurred the displeasure of Paul for having left them at Perga, in Pamphylia, in their former mission, before the work on which they had entered was finished. Paul's zeal was of that character that he knew no compromise. He, who had withdrawn his hand from the plough and turned back, was no fit companion for him, who "counted not his own life dear."

The contention, therefore, which arose in consequence between Paul and Barnabas, in respect of associating John with them on this occasion,

was so sharp, that they at length determined not only on taking different routes, but different companions with them. Barnabas sailed to Cyprus, his native country, accompanied by his nephew John ; and Paul, attended by Silas, who had attached himself with great earnestness to him, went forth, “ being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.”

As Barnabas had chosen to visit his native country, Cyprus, so Paul went through Syria to Cilicia, his native province, “ confirming the churches.” The leading object of this second visit of the Apostle (A.D. 50) appears to have been, that he might impart to them the same joy and consolation in respect of the decree of the Council at Jerusalem, which had followed the reading of the epistle at Antioch. For the same busy and intermeddling spirit which had unsettled the brethren in that city, had visited with its baneful influence other churches also. To stay the progress of this evil dissension, appears to have been the object of Paul in suggesting to Barnabas the expediency of visiting those converts, whom they had made in their previous journey, to see how they did, and ascertain whether they were steadfast in the faith, or had become tossed by the waves of this turbulent tempest. Wherever he went he delivered the decree of the

Council at Jerusalem, which, though primarily addressed to the Church at Antioch, contained a decision obligatory upon all. The presence of Silas, the deputed messenger of the Church at Jerusalem, would tend to give effect to his endeavours; so that "the churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily." It was about this period that Titus is supposed to have been ordained by St. Paul, Bishop of Crete. (A.D. 50.)

From Cilicia the Apostle passed into the country of Iconium, and visited the cities of Derbe and Lystra. Here he took into his company Timothy, with whom in his former journey he had become acquainted. Timothy was both Jew and Gentile by birth, his father being a Grecian, his mother a Jewess. In respect of his father he was exempt from the legal ordinance of circumcision, but on the part of his mother it was obligatory upon him. As a devout Greek, baptized into the Lord Jesus, the decree at Jerusalem absolved him from the necessity, without at the same time depriving him of the option, of being circumcised. In matters purely voluntary, it is no violation either of truth or justice, if for the sake and benefit of others, we at different times, and under different circumstances, vary in our conduct. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor un-

circumcision.” If circumcision were insisted upon as an indispensable duty, as it had been at Antioch, it became the Apostle openly and uncompromisingly to resist it; but if the observance of it in one, to whom the act was entirely voluntary, and the observance or non-observance was alike indifferent to himself, but important in respect of his usefulness to others, was likely to be beneficial to the cause to which he was most earnestly devoted, then not only did it become lawful, but expedient, and proper to be attended to. Some reason of this kind probably induced Paul to have Timothy circumcised, before he took him as his companion in his second evangelical journey. This act of the Apostle would tend to mitigate the prejudices of the Jews towards himself, and obtain for Timothy a more ready admittance into the synagogues, where his knowledge of the writings of the Old Testament would enable him to plead more effectually the cause of Him, who was “the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

From Derbe and Lystra they proceeded onward to Phrygia and Galatia, and being forbidden by a divine intimation to preach the word in Asia, they came to Mysia; and again over-ruled by the same Divine Spirit, which had turned their steps from penetrating into the interior of Asia when

at Galatia, from going into Bithynia, they reached Troas. Here was explained to them the reason, why they were not allowed at that time to carry the knowledge of the truth into the other provinces of Asia, which had not yet heard the name of Christ. A more extended sphere of evangelical exertion awaited them. The fallow ground of Gentile Europe was to be broken up; and to Paul and his company, including Silas, and Luke the writer of the Gospel bearing his name, and the author of the Acts of the Apostles, was that glorious commission given.

To Paul appeared, in the night season, a vision; that of a man of Macedonia entreating him in these remarkable words, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Troas, where this vision was seen, lies on the eastern coast of Asia, a place highly celebrated in history and ancient songs; and Macedonia, to which Paul was invited to come, is situated on the opposite coast of Europe, and forms one of its two divisions, the other of which is Achaia. From Macedonia went forth 384 years before the victorious Alexander, who, by the power of his arms, subjugated Asia. In his triumphant career he visited that spot, which was now made the place from which were sent forth the feet of the messengers of peace, to proclaim the message of glad tidings, and call upon

the nations to beat their swords into ploughshares, and receive the dominion of Him, the effects of whose battles are not garments rolled in blood, but the peaceable fruits of righteousness and truth.

In the morning Paul made known to his companions the vision which he had seen; and as they all concurred in the same exposition of it, that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel unto the people of Macedonia, they immediately obeyed the call, and set forth for Europe. In their way they came to the island of Samothrace, lying between the coasts of Europe and Asia; and crossing thence, they came on the following day to the sea-port of Neapolis.

The first or principal town to which they came in Macedonia was Philippi, a town which received its name from Philip, the celebrated king of that country, who greatly ornamented and favoured it; it is also celebrated as being the scene of the defeat of Brutus and Cassius by Mark Antony and Augustus Cæsar, in their bloody struggle for mastery (A.D. 42). It was also a Roman colony planted by Julius Cæsar, and for this reason, perhaps, it is called by St. Luke "the chief city of that part of Macedonia."

It appears that the Jews had in this place a small house of prayer, situated, as was their cus-

tom, on the banks of the river, to which their converts resorted on the Sabbath-day. Thither Paul and his companions betook themselves on the first Sabbath-day after their arrival in the city, and spoke the words of their message to the women who were there accustomed to worship. Nor without effect. Their first convert was Lydia, not indeed a native of Europe, for she was from Thyatira, a city of Asia Minor; but she was a worshipper of Jehovah, and "the Lord opened her heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." She with her household (for she was a seller of purple) was baptized; and so highly was she esteemed by Paul, that he and his company took up their abode in her house. During their stay, and on their way to the usual place of prayer by the river-side, on one occasion they were met by a young woman possessed with a spirit of divination, which, after some days, Paul cast out in the name of Jesus Christ.

Philippi was under the jurisdiction of the Romans, amongst whom divination and oracles were held in repute and estimation. This damsel belonged to certain persons, who made traffic of her skill. When, therefore, she was dispossessed of that which had been to them a source of gain, they became indignant, and stirred up the people

against Paul and Silas, and dragging them before the Roman tribunal, accused them of creating a tumult in the city and violating Roman customs. The Apostles were roughly treated by the magistrate, who, after they had caused them to be scourged, cast them, unheard, into prison. But the same Divine Power which brought forth Peter in Jerusalem from the watchful and close vigilance of Herod, was equally efficient to deliver his servants at Philippi from the custody and fetters of their blind and enraged accusers ; and so firm was the trust of the prisoners in the power of their Master, that the horrors of the prison-house had no terrors for them. “ They prayed, and sang praises unto God.” Their songs, which broke the gloomy horror of the midnight darkness, and which attracted the listening attention of the other prisoners, were only interrupted by the violence of an earthquake, which shook the foundation of the prison, rocked the doors from their fastenings, and unloosed the manacles from their hands. A way of escape was, therefore, opened to the prisoners, who, however, did not avail themselves of it. They were free indeed from their bonds, but they forgot not the cause for which they were then called upon to suffer. They arrested the hand of the keeper of the prison raised to inflict self-murder, through apprehension of

the escape of his charge. They saved him from that destruction, and were instrumental in delivering him from a more fearful end, for they declared to him the method of salvation; "they spake unto him, and to all who were in his house, the Word of the Lord." His heart was melted; his ignorance dissipated; his anxiety to keep them in safe custody was turned into an eagerness to minister to their wants. He washed their wounds, he supplied them with food, he received their word with gladness, and he and all his house believed in God, and without delay were baptized. Here was another instance of the fulfilment of the Saviour's command to his Apostles, to make all nations Christian by baptism.

Great must have been this man's faith, who not only could treat with kindness those whom his masters had despitefully used, and wash those wounds which had been inflicted by them under whom he acted; but who could brave the charge of treachery, and the sneers of old associates, to embrace the opinions of those who were placed under his keeping, to be reserved for further punishment.

Not only also had his sentiments undergone in one short night so great a change, but a change had come over those who had abused their office and power to work cruelty and injustice. The

violence of the earthquake might have wrought upon their superstition, and caused them to consider it as a mark of the displeasure of their gods for their violence of the preceding day, whilst reflection had taught them to be ashamed of their unjust proceedings: when, therefore, it was day, they sent their officers commanding the jailor to let the prisoners go. But the prisoners would not be so dismissed. Conscious of their own innocence, and firm in the trust in Him in whom they believed, they refused to depart before they who had beaten them, uncondemned, should themselves come and fetch them out. As Roman citizens their stripes demanded reparation; as men uncondemned, and yet publicly beaten, respect for their own character required an avowal of their innocence, as public as had been the ill-treatment and injustice they had experienced. Their demand was complied with, and they left the city, having sown the seed of the Gospel, which was afterwards to bring forth fruit abundantly.

The unjust and cruel treatment which they had experienced in this their first essay to help the people of Macedonia, according to the invitation of the vision, did not deter them from persevering in the work which they had begun. From Philippi, where Luke was left by his companions,

as may be inferred from his no longer speaking of himself as joined with Paul, they proceeded through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and came to Thessalonica, "where was a synagogue of the Jews." Here they took up their abode; and on three successive Sabbath-days Paul reasoned with those who frequented the synagogue, and who, therefore, were conversant with the revelation contained in the Jewish Scriptures, which spake prophetically of the Messiah. Out of these Scriptures Paul reasoned with them, proving the necessity of the sufferings of Christ, and the truth of his resurrection. Some were convinced by his reasoning and became companions of him and Silas. Many of the Grecian proselytes, also, and several of the chief women of the place, believed. Nor were they the only fruits of the harvest of grace in Thessalonica. Many of the Gentiles became convinced of the vanity of serving idols, and turned to the living and true God. Amongst them Paul abode for some time, and supported himself by the work of his own hands, labouring day and night. (1 Thess. i. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8.) He also received assistance from the infant Church which he had established at Philippi on two several occasions. (Phil. iv. 16.)

The success which attended his work of the ministry at Thessalonica excited the malignity of

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the unbelieving Jews, who, by means of the rabble of the city, stirred up an uproar and made a violent assault upon the house of Jason, a relation of the Apostle (Rom. xvi. 21), where they lodged. Disappointed in not finding the Apostolical company, they dragged Jason and some other converts before the rulers, accusing them of turbulence and sedition; a charge which always alarmed the fears of a Roman tribunal. Jason, however, and his associates were dismissed, on their giving due security for their peaceable and orderly conduct. But though thus dismissed, they clearly saw that Thessalonica was no longer a safe abode for their teachers; they, therefore, set about providing them with the means of escape, which they successfully accomplished in the night season.

Thus was the Apostle compelled to withdraw himself from Thessalonica, as he had been from Philippi. His sojourn, however, at Thessalonica had been marked with great success, for he planted a Church, "whose work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father," the Apostle did not cease to remember. It was also during his sojourn in Thessalonica that Paul commenced another mode of instruction, more lasting than that of preaching—the writing of epistles or

letters to those churches already planted, which he was unable to visit in person. The object of them is not to introduce new doctrines, but rather to record and elucidate those already revealed. The first of these is his noble Epistle to the Galatians, written A.D. 51. The object of it was to set the Galatian converts right in respect of the false doctrines of certain Judaizing Christians, who were teaching that obedience to the ceremonial law was the cause of salvation. In opposition to them Paul plainly and distinctly, and with the clearest argument, sets forth the sufficiency of faith in Christ. The discussion of this question first introduced dissension and schism into the Christian Church. Even the decree of the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem (A.D. 49) did not extinguish its torch of error. It was the cause of the embassy of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch to Jerusalem, and of Judas and Silas from Jerusalem to Antioch. It moved Paul to undertake his second apostolical journey. Wherever he had planted a Church, there did he leave the decision of the Council; and wherever he went, he preached the doctrine of faith in the crucified Jesus boldly and without reserve. But wherever he went and preached this doctrine, he was met with opposition; and the corrupt passions of men, as if to afford practical evidence of the truth of what he

advocated, were roused to refute, if possible, the preaching of the cross.

The argument of this Epistle shews evidently the subject which occupied so prominent a part in the early discussions of the Christian Church, and serves to point out the period of its composition about the year 51, when the mind of the Apostle, from the circumstances already detailed, would of necessity be deeply and constantly engaged in its consideration. This remark may serve to elucidate the great principle advocated by the Apostle in this his first epistle, in which he destroys the pretensions of the Jews founded on outward acts, and establishes the pure faith of Christ as the Gospel method of salvation.

CHAPTER XIII.

A.D. 51, 52.

ACTS XVII. 10 to end ; XVIII. to 18.

The Bereans. — Paul at Athens. — Corinth. — First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians. — Gallio.

THE Apostle having escaped from the uproar raised against him and his companions in Thessalonica, and having seen his friends restored to liberty on giving security, passed under cover of the night to Berea, another town in Macedonia. The Jews in Berea had obtained the high distinction of being more noble than those of Thessalonica, because of their readiness in receiving the word and their assiduity in searching the Scriptures, by which they were enabled to judge more clearly and correctly of the truth of what they heard taught, and preached by Paul and his companions. Hence many of them were convinced and embraced the Gospel; and their example was followed by several persons of distinction amongst the Greeks, both men and women. But even here, with so ready a reception and so intelligent a body of believers, there was no rest to the

Apostle from persecution ; the spirit of Jewish intolerance followed him from Thessalonica to Berea, and hunted him, as it had before done in Asia, from that city. So eager, indeed, was the pursuit after him, that he was under the necessity of parting from Silas and Timothy, whom he left behind in Berea, and of using a feint to cover his escape. He was conducted by the brethren who were appointed for that purpose, by land to Athens, that celebrated city of Grecian literature and Grecian glory. All that the wisdom of man could devise, or human ingenuity discover, was there cultivated. It was called Athens from the name of Athena or Minerva, the fabulous goddess of wisdom, and was the stronghold of human learning and refined knowledge. Its schools were the resort of all, from every part of the Gentile world, who sought for distinction in arts and philosophy. Its sages were most renowned, and the names of Plato and Socrates stand pre-eminent, whilst their writings and sentiments exhibit the highest stretch to which human reason ever attained. Yet, sublime and refined as are their writings, the most finished which philosophy could elaborate from the mines of thought and science, they fall far short of the simple but authoritative maxims and teaching of revelation, and afford an unanswerable evidence of the truth of the Apostle's assertion, that

“the world by wisdom knew not God.” For in the refined Athens, the seat of literature, and the throne of science, and the metropolis of philosophy, there was a greater extent of idolatry than was to be found in all the rest of Greece. Having exhausted the vocabulary of other deities, they had reared an altar to the Unknown God, on the various accounts of which it is not necessary here to enter. There were also amongst the Athenians various schools or sects of philosophers, the chief of which were the Epicureans and the Stoics; the former of whom atheistically made all happiness to consist in pleasure, and the perfection of wisdom in devising the means of enjoyment, whilst the latter acknowledged a Providence, but bound both the Deity and the souls of men “fast in fate.” The principles of the Epicureans, therefore, tended to laxity of morals and dissolute habits, and those of the Stoics generated pride and fostered impiety.

St. Paul arrived at Athens A.D. 51. There is much in all his conduct in every place to excite admiration for his prudence in adapting his teaching to the various habits and peculiarities of his hearers; thus affording a laudable example to all engaged in preaching the doctrines of Christ, especially those who go forth on the message of

love and reconciliation to lands yet unvisited by the light of truth.

The narration of the conduct of the Apostle at Athens is brief. Silas and Timothy, whom he had left at Berea, were to follow and join him at Athens. Whilst he was waiting for their coming, his righteous soul, like that of Lot in Sodom, was stirred within him, "when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." His first step was to dispute in the synagogues with the Jews, his own countrymen, and others who worshipped with them. At Athens, as in all other places, this was Paul's custom ; his countrymen were the first to whom he addressed himself, for to them belonged the promises, and their synagogues were the scenes of the declaration of his message, thus shewing that he neglected not the established worship of his country. But his affection for the Jews did not render him unmindful of the welfare of the Gentiles.

In the market-place at Athens, or rather the forum or agora, probably that called the Eretrian, situated opposite to the porch where the Stoics assembled for their disputations, did Paul take his stand to speak to them of the faith of Christ. Attracted by his reputation, and the reports of those whom he had already encountered in his

daily walks through the city, certain of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. Some of them appear to have held him in derision, as a babbler or vain talker; whilst others alleged that he was a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. Now the law of Athens visited with death all those who presumed to introduce the worship of a new god. This, therefore, was an allegation which, if proved before the proper tribunal, would have brought him under trial for a capital offence.

Whilst, therefore, he was accused by some of a grave charge, obnoxious to death, and by others ridiculed with an expression which denoted the utmost contempt and scorn, it required no ordinary exercise of prudence and ability to refute the one and gainsay the other. Yet this he did with admirable management, tempering his zeal with knowledge, and advocating truth with prudence yet without compromise. Brought to the hill of Mars, called the Areopagus, in order that there might be more space for the Athenians, who are celebrated for their idle curiosity, to hear what this stranger had to set forth, Paul of Tarsus, the lonely Hebrew, the babbler as they called him, stood amongst the assembled group of those at that period most celebrated for wisdom

and classic refinement. He was ignorant neither of the character of those who were ready to dispute with him, nor of the peculiar usages and customs of the place, for he was not rude in human learning; neither was he inferior to any of his civilized opponents in the acts of courtesy, for the true spirit of Christianity teaches suavity of manners, and by inculcating the royal maxim of doing unto others as we would have others do unto us, enforces the very essence of good manners. His address to the enlightened auditory, by whom he was surrounded, displays as well the courtesies of oratory as the principles of truth; and it is difficult to say which is most to be admired, the skill with which he adapts his language and style to meet their peculiarities, or the force with which he applies the truth of the great doctrines he was called upon to set forth and enforce, in making known to them "the Unknown God." The elegance of his address obtained for him a courteous hearing, and though the declaration of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead (which they had imagined to be a deity) drew from some an expression of mockery, it elicited from others a wish to hear him again on this matter. The word of truth penetrated the hearts of others, and carried off as spoils from

the worship of idols, "Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

Having appealed to the philosophic Athenians in a manner which could not fail to leave in their minds a favourable impression of the powers of mind possessed by a barbarian, for so the Greeks denominated all other nations, as the Jews called all others Gentiles, Paul took his departure from that celebrated city, and went to Corinth. This also was a place of great importance, situated between two seas, and forming the gate of entrance between the Morea and Attica. It was notorious for idol-worship and the grossest practices of heathen abominations. It was in its neighbourhood that the Isthmian games were celebrated. At this place Paul took up his abode. He had, previously to leaving Athens, sent Timothy, who had come to him from Berea, to visit his converts at Thessalonica, "to establish and comfort them concerning their faith," and bring to him a report of their state (1 Thess. iii. 1-7), with directions to rejoin him at Corinth. He took up his residence in the house of a countryman named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who with his wife Priscilla had lately come from Rome, to avoid the dangers of the edict made by the Emperor Claudius against the Jews (A.D. 51): Aquila

was by trade a tent-maker. In the same occupation Paul had been trained at Tarsus, for every Jew was constrained to learn some trade. Similarity of worldly calling, as well as spiritual inclination, brought Paul and Aquila together. Here it was the Apostle was compelled to labour with his own hands in his worldly occupation for his daily bread, whilst waiting for the return of Timothy and the coming of Silas. But this did not render him forgetful of his higher calling in Christ Jesus, for every Sabbath-day he reasoned in the synagogue, the worship of which he was careful to attend, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks; amongst them probably were the families of Stephanas and Epenetus, whom he calls the first-fruits of Achaia (Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Corinth. xvi. 15). It is uncertain how long he remained before his associates joined him. But on their arrival the account given him by Timothy of the state of the Thessalonian Church (1 Thess. iii. 6, 7) appears to have affected him with deep emotion, and caused him to give himself up entirely to the preaching of the word and the work of the ministry during the remainder of his stay in Corinth. One mark of his zeal and untiring earnestness in the cause of his heavenly Master is to be found in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, which he wrote at this time (A.D. 51).

Prevented as he was from revisiting them at that season, and made acquainted with their state, their wants, and their advancement in the Gospel, he sent to them in the name of himself, and Silvanus (or Silas), and Timothy, a written exposition of his sentiments, in which he furnished them with fitting arguments by which to resist the enticements of their spiritual adversaries, who were striving to unsettle their faith and turn them back to idol-worship. Accordingly, he lays plainly before them the evidences of the truth of the Gospel which he had preached amongst them, and enforces the observance of its duties in conformity with its character and obligations.

The concluding injunction to the Thessalonians to read the epistle “to all the holy brethren,” establishes that practice, which is the peculiar privilege of the Protestant, the reading of the Holy Scriptures amongst the people without restriction or difference.

The first effort of the Apostle at Corinth to make known the Gospel was in behalf of his own countrymen; but when the members of the synagogue refused the word, and treated the message with contumely, he turned from them with a solemn protestation, and declared his purpose to go henceforth unto the Gentiles. When he had left the synagogue he entered into an adjacent

house belonging to a certain devout worshipper, named Justus, and made that the scene of his teaching.

Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, followed him, and himself with all his house believed on the Lord, and was baptized by Paul (1 Cor. i. 14). His example was followed by many of the Corinthians, who hearing, believed, and were baptized. These were to him gratifying proofs of the efficiency of his ministration, yet the Apostle seems to have felt deeply the repeated discouragements he met with in every place from the unmitigating opposition of his countrymen, so that as he confesses (1 Cor. ii. 3), he “was amongst them in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling.” The Lord, however, did not leave him to sink under the weight of this discouragement, for during the night succeeding his withdrawal from the synagogue, a high confirmation was afforded him of the approval of his labours by his Divine Master, in a vision, which encouraged him to persevere boldly under the assurance of the Divine protection, as promised to the Disciples by the risen Jesus just before his ascension into heaven, and by the encouraging declaration that “God had much people in that city.”

Thus assured, the Apostle settled himself at

Corinth, and perseveringly pursued his spiritual calling for a year and six months, "teaching the word of God among them."

During this period (A.D. 52) he wrote his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the necessity of which appears to have been caused by a misinterpretation of some passages contained in his former letter, in respect of the near approach of the coming of Christ and the day of judgment.

Since the writing of his former epistle the Church at Thessalonica had grown in numbers and increased in Christian graces. We gather this from the Second Epistle (i. 3, 4), in which the Apostle "thanks God because that their faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of them all toward each other aboundeth," so that both he, and Silvanus, and Timothy, "gloried in them in the Churches of God, for their patience and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations that they endured."

Thus was Paul careful of the spiritual welfare and perseverance of his distant converts, confirming, encouraging, cautioning, and exhorting them by letters. Nor was he less careful over the little flock which had come within the fold of his Master at Corinth: neither did he rest from using every effort to persuade and convince those who yet resisted his preaching of the word. So earnest

was he, that the evil spirit of Jewish intolerance again burst forth. Taking advantage of the presence of the Roman proconsul they resumed their attacks upon him, and dragged him before the judgment-seat of Gallio, accusing him of violating the Jewish law. Gallio, the Roman governor, brother of the celebrated Seneca who is no less distinguished for his moral writings than for his having been put to death by Nero, whose preceptor he had been, is represented by historians as a man of amiable character and great literary attainments. He refused to receive the charge laid against Paul, not wishing to interfere between the accusers and accused in respect of questions relating to their religious profession. He, therefore, dismissed them without ceremony from his tribunal. A tumult ensued, in which Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, who had probably succeeded Crispus in that office, and who had been foremost in arraigning Paul, was beaten by the Grecians in the presence of the governor, even before the judgment-seat. "But Gallio cared not for these things." The quarrel was between Jews and Grecians, both of them tributary to his nation, and so long as the supremacy of the Roman power was not questioned or endangered, it mattered not to him.

The Apostle continued to reside some time

longer in Corinth after this futile attempt of his countrymen upon him, and his exertions were crowned with great success in establishing a Christian Church, comprehending not only the converts already named, but many others also, of whom he has left this noble testimony, that they “were enriched by God in all utterance, and in all knowledge; having the testimony of Christ confirmed in them, so that they came behind in no gift” (1 Cor. i. 5-7).

CHAPTER XIV.

A.D. 53-56.

ACTS XVIII. 18 to end ; XIX. to 20.

Crete, Nicopolis.—Epistle to Titus.—Illyricum.—Cenchrea.
—First Visit to Ephesus.—Cæsarea.—Jerusalem.—Antioch.—Conclusion of the Second Apostolical Journey.—Commencement of the Third.—Apollon at Ephesus and Corinth.—Paul's Second Visit to Ephesus.—Ephesian Magicians.—Their Failure.—The Triumph of the Gospel.

WHEN the Apostle departed from Corinth, he is supposed to have passed over into Crete, where he had left his beloved son Titus, whom he appointed Bishop of the Church founded there, with power and command "to set in order the things which were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city," according to apostolic appointment. In this we trace a leading feature in the economy of the Church of Christ in the primitive age, when under the sanction and immediate influence of the Holy Spirit. The ordination of ministers by those only who had derived their own appointment from the Great Head of the Church himself, is a fact expressly recorded ; and the power delegated to Titus at Crete to transmit the same kind of com-

mission to faithful men, shews the manner in which the Apostles designed the spiritual building to be carried on, from one generation of men to another, in conformity with the original design of Him who is the head-stone of the corner.

After the Apostle had left Titus at Crete, he was compelled by the approach of winter (Titus, iii. 12) to take up his abode at Nicopolis in Epirus, near to Actium, the place celebrated for the victory of Augustus Cæsar over his former colleague Marc Antony, 84 years before, and built by the conqueror in honour of that event, which made him master of the Roman world. During his sojourn at this place (A.D. 53), Paul is supposed (although the matter is much controverted) to have composed his Epistle to Titus, to furnish him with a written digest of instructions by which to regulate his own conduct as bishop, and to direct others also in the way of godliness: a digest not less useful to Titus in that primitive age, than abounding with important lessons to spiritual rulers and teachers in every subsequent period.

In the Epistle to the Romans (xv. 19) the Apostle speaks of his having fully preached the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum. It might be that he made known the way of life at this period, which he is supposed to have spent at Nicopolis, to the regions

of Illyricum, for they lay convenient for his goings out and comings in at that place. On leaving Nicopolis on his way towards Syria, we find him at Cenchrea, which is the port lying adjacent to Corinth, on the side of the Sinus Saronicus. At this place Aquila and Priscilla joined him, where, according to a vow, the former had shorn his head, being still zealous for Jewish rites and ceremonies. Others suppose that it was Paul who performed the vow, and as he did not hold himself bound to observe legal ordinances, he did so out of that tender regard for the scruples of others which distinguished all his conduct. Hence as long hair was considered by the Greeks ornamental, he is supposed to have allowed his to grow during his sojourn in Greece, thus becoming to the Greeks a Greek—whilst, as he was now on the point of returning to mix more amongst his own countrymen, he conformed to their peculiarity in having his head shorn, thus becoming to the Jews a Jew; in both cases with the sole purpose that he “might by all means win them to Christ.”

From Cenchrea he proceeded to Ephesus; where having, as was his custom, entered into the synagogue, he reasoned with the Jews. Contrary to the treatment which he had generally met with from his countrymen, the Jews at Ephesus re-

ceived him so favourably, that they entreated his longer stay among them ; but his purpose to be present at Jerusalem at the approaching Passover prevented his compliance, for he was anxious to be present on that occasion, having been absent more than five years. Leaving his companions with the assurance of his purpose to return to them again, he took his departure from Ephesus by sea, and having landed at Cæsarea, which has the honourable distinction of being the place where was made the first Gentile convert, he proceeded to Jerusalem, and was permitted to accomplish that for which he had so earnestly longed—to keep the Feast of the Passover. He also held communion with the Church there established, and having delivered to its members an account of his proceedings, he returned to Antioch, thus completing his second apostolic journey (A.D. 54).

Thus terminated his second evangelical journey, in which he had not only visited and confirmed the churches which he had before planted, but had also raised up new ones, having preached the Gospel not only in Asia, but in the most refined part of Europe ; not only to Jews and Greeks, but to Barbarians also. The five years he had been absent are of great importance in the history of the Christian Church, developing in

their progress its perfect building, and the manner in which it was to be perpetuated for the salvation of man, whether Jew or Gentile, to the glory of God.

Having attended to whatever might be necessary in the Church at Antioch, which has already been described as the metropolis of the Gentile, as Jerusalem was of the Jewish Church, the Apostle set out on his third ecclesiastical journey (A.D. 55). He took the route which led him to the Churches of Galatia and Phrygia; and wherever he went he strengthened all the disciples. His visits were not of idle ceremony or useless courtesy, but of deep and affectionate interest. He had planted them at first, he watched over them with a parent's solicitude; his inmost soul was engaged for their eternal welfare. Whatever was amiss, he corrected; whatever was decayed, he repaired; whatever was wanting, he established; he strengthened all the disciples, for "in Christ Jesus he had begotten them through the Gospel." (1 Cor. iv. 15.)

Whilst he was thus occupied in Galatia and Phrygia, Ephesus had become the scene of some interesting events. Apollos, a native of Alexandria, a city in Egypt very celebrated for the cultivation of literature, had taken up his abode in Ephesus. He had been instructed in the way

of the Lord according to the teaching of John, whose baptism he had received. Being endowed with great power of eloquence, and having a lively zeal for the glory of the Lord Jehovah, he entered the Jewish synagogue, and boldly preached out of the Jewish Scriptures, in which he was powerful, not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but the doctrines of John, repentance and baptism, preparatory to the reception of the kingdom of the expected Messiah.

Aquila and Priscilla, Paul's former companions, were at that time in Ephesus, and seeing the zeal and spirit of Apollos, they made an associate of him, and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." He was not slow to receive their instruction, and so greatly were the Ephesian Christians persuaded of his sincerity and zeal, that on his purposing to visit Achaia they gave him letters of recommendation to the brethren there, by whom he was kindly received, and to whom he became a source of great help in convincing the Jews, out of their own Scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ. Nay, so great was his eloquence, that Paul refers to him as watering and nurturing the seed which he himself had planted at Corinth (1 Cor. iii. 16); and many of the converts in that city were disposed to set him up as the head of a party in opposition to their first teacher.

Whilst he was thus usefully engaged in increasing the number at Corinth of those who believed through grace, Paul returned, according to his purpose made known to them in his first visit the year preceding, to Ephesus (A.D. 55). On his arrival he found there twelve disciples, who had imbibed the doctrines first taught by Apollos, having been baptized unto John's baptism, and being ignorant of the name and power of the Holy Ghost. Paul explained to them the nature of that baptism; that it was preparatory to the reception of Jesus Christ, whose messenger John had been, and whose baptism was not of repentance and water, but of water and the Holy Ghost. "When they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus;" and by the laying on of Paul's hands, as Peter had before done to the Samaritan converts, the gift of the Holy Spirit, of whose existence they had previously been ignorant, was conveyed to them, so that "they spake with tongues and prophesied." For three months the Apostle exerted himself at Ephesus, speaking boldly in the synagogue, "disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." But the inveterate spirit of Judaism resisted his appeals, and compelled him according to the advice which he had given the Thessalonians to "withdraw himself from them

that walked disorderly.” Those that believed followed him from the synagogue of the Jews to the school of one Tyrannus, in which he disputed daily for the space of two years, during which time the word of the Lord Jesus was spread throughout the whole of Asia among both Jews and Greeks.

The period of his abode at Ephesus was distinguished not only by the power and success of his preaching, but by the working of miracles upon the bodies even of the absent sick, and by the driving out of evil spirits. Ephesus was a stronghold of idolatry; and it is worthy of remark that the followers of the lowly Galilean seem to have chosen out as the scenes of their mission, not the obscure or isolated places of the earth, but rather those towns and cities which were abundant in population and mighty in worldly wisdom—places foremost in heathen greatness. Hence we find them at Cæsarea, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Athens. Ephesus, the scene of Paul’s present labours, was distinguished not only for the splendour of the temple of the heathen goddess Diana, which was one of the seven wonders of the world, but for the practice of magical arts, which were so generally practised that Ephesian incantations became proverbial, and Ephesian letters were believed to possess a sovereign efficacy in charms and incantations. Nor was the practice of magic

confined to heathen idolaters. There were at that time vagabond Jews in Ephesus, who followed the same deluding but prohibited customs. Not content with their former arts, and names, and words of incantation, they took up the name of Jesus, as possessing a charm superior to them all—a name which Paul used for the miraculous healing of diseases, and for the expulsion of evil spirits. But as the Egyptian magicians were foiled in their own arts by the superior powers exercised by Moses in the name of Jehovah; so at Ephesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, these vagabond Jewish magicians were rebuked by the man on whom they were exercising their delusions. The evil spirit, as in the case of the demoniacs at Capernaum in the presence of Christ, acknowledged they knew Jesus, whose name had been used, and Paul who was authorised to use that name, but they refused to acknowledge the authority of those pretenders to the power of working miracles. This signal failure of the magicians, contrasted with the success which attended the Apostle, had the effect of advancing the truth and power of Him in whose name Paul preached, and of detecting the fallacy of that art by which the seven sons of Sceva, chief of the Jewish priests, would have imposed upon the people. Whilst, therefore, it destroyed the credit and influence of the one, it demon-

strated and established the claims of the other ; and so great was the impression it made upon the Ephesians, that not only was the name of the Lord Jesus magnified, but many both believed and confessed, and made a public exposition of their former deeds ; whilst others who had “ used curious arts,” brought and piled up together their magic books, in which the Ephesian letters were enrolled, and burned them before all men. The value of these books was 50,000 pieces of silver, which, according to the value attached to different silver coins used by the ancients, would vary from 1875*l.* to 7500*l.* This was indeed a triumph of God over Mammon ! this was counting all things loss to win Christ ! “ So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed ! ” (A.D. 56.)

CHAPTER XV.

A.D. 56.

ACTS XIX. 21 ; XX.

First Epistle to the Corinthians.—Church at Ephesus.—Paul's Departure for Macedonia.—Timothy.—First Epistle to Timothy.—Second Visit to Macedonia.—Second Epistle to the Corinthians.—Third Visit to them.—Epistle to the Romans.—Troas.—Eutychus.—Pathetic Separation from the Ephesian Bishops at Miletus.

THE object of the Apostle's long residence at Ephesus was now well-nigh accomplished. He began, therefore, to form fresh plans for renewing his journey to those places in Europe where he had already planted Christian Churches—Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. He was anxious to revisit them, and strengthen them in the faith, and encourage them by his personal exhortations to persevere steadfast unto the end. His purpose was to retrace nearly the same route which he had used in his first visit to them, and then to proceed to Jerusalem, remarking, "after I have been there, I must also see Rome."

But before he entered upon this visit to them, he thought it prudent to send forward Timothy

and Erastus. The former he had employed and found faithful in a similar mission to the Thessalonians; of the latter we have had no previous mention: but in the Epistle to the Romans (xvi. 23), he is called Chamberlain of the City of Corinth; and we read of him several years subsequently as abiding still at Corinth. (2 Tim. iv. 20.)

His intention was to follow them shortly into Macedonia; but having heard of several irregular proceedings in the Church at Corinth, which was reported to him to be torn by dissensions of Judaizing Christians and Gentile converts, who still adhered to their former habits of licentiousness, and by the worldly wisdom of philosophizing pretenders to the truth, he found it necessary first to write to the Church of God which was in Corinth a plain exposition, of the truths which he wished to maintain, of the errors he desired to refute, and of the duties, the observance of which he was anxious to enforce. This was his First Epistle to the Corinthians (A.D. 57), in which he not only asserted his own dignity as an Apostle, in opposition to those who pretended to despise his authority, but reproved the irregular conduct of those who had introduced disorders and unprofitable questions into the Church, by which the pure faith which he had taught was in danger of being adulterated. He also gave earnest di-

rections to the disciples, both in respect of their own personal conduct, and the necessity of adhering to soundness of doctrine and regularity of constituted discipline.

We learn, also, from this Epistle, that during his abode at Ephesus some of his former friends gathered round, and held communion with him. Thus Sosthenes, who on the occasion of the uproar at Corinth was beaten by the Greeks almost in the presence of Gallio, is associated with the Apostle in his opening address to the Church at Corinth (i. 1); from which we infer that he had become subsequently a convert to that faith which he had before despised. We read too of some of the household of Chloe (ii. 1), who brought him the report that there were contentions among the Corinthians. Apollos also had returned unto him after his successful preaching at Corinth (xvi. 12), having refused to accompany Timothy and Erastus on their mission, apprehensive, probably, of fomenting the spirit of disunion which had arisen from some of the converts setting him up in preference to Paul. His abiding with the Apostle was the best practical reproof he could give such mistaken professors, and is an instructive instance of Christian humility and peace.

There were also with Paul, Stephanas, one of the first-fruits of the spiritual seed-time in Achaia

(xvi. 15), and Fortunatus and Achaicus (17), and Aquila and Priscilla (19). Onesiphorus, who was afterwards so faithful to him in his bonds at Rome, "ministered in many things unto him at Ephesus." (2 Tim. i. 18.) Among the many converts made during his ministry at Ephesus are reckoned Epaphras, who was afterwards a faithful minister at Colosse (i. 7), and Philemon, to whom the Apostle wrote an epistle in behalf of his runaway slave Onesimus.

But his ministration at Ephesus, so protracted and abounding with so many trophies of his zeal and perseverance, was at length interrupted and brought to an end, not as on all other occasions in other places by the Jews, but by Demetrius, an Ephesian craftsman, a maker of images of the goddess Diana. He, finding that the worship of the goddess was falling into disrepute in consequence of the success of Paul's preaching, and his trade injured by the fact of so many abjuring idolatry and becoming worshippers of the one true God, which forbids all use of images, stirred up a commotion among his fellow-craftsmen, which threw the whole city into confusion. During the tumult which ensued, there were seized and forcibly dragged into the theatre, where games were celebrated in honour of Diana, Gaius, one of the

Apostle's converts at Corinth, and in whose house he sojourned for some time, and one of the few whom he himself there baptized, and Aristarchus, who subsequently was a companion in captivity with him at Rome. (Col. iv. 10.)

Paul was not suffered by his friends and some of the chief men of Asia to adventure himself into the midst of the tumult. Whilst the rioters, who, like most mobs of this description, had no settled purpose of unity of sentiment, or reasonable grounds for their conduct, were advancing various and contradictory charges, the Jews, in order to shelter themselves from being visited with the same illegal violence, as well as to shew their malicious spirit against Paul, put forth a copper-smith, named Alexander, to defend them. This Alexander is supposed to be the same who is mentioned in connexion with Hymeneus, as having made shipwreck of his faith (1 Tim. i. 20), and as being an evil opponent of the Apostle. (2 Tim. iv. 14.) But he was not permitted to make his defence by the multitude, whose vociferation of "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" drowned all other speech. The tumult was, after two hours, appeased by the Town-clerk or Recorder, who, in a cautious and prudent address, shewed the people not only the folly of their proceedings, but the

risk they incurred of being called in question for that day's uproar, according to the Roman law in such cases.

The Apostle escaped this violence, but it caused him to determine to carry into effect, without further delay, his purpose of leaving Ephesus. Having, therefore, taken an affectionate farewell of the brethren, he departed from them to go into Macedonia, accompanied by Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, and Gaius of Derbe. (A.D. 57.) Timothy had returned to Ephesus before his departure from his mission into Macedonia, and to his care and superintendence the Church planted in that city was committed.

This Timothy had been converted by Paul and Barnabas in their first apostolic journey at Lystra, where his pious mother Eunice, and grandmother Lois, were residing, by whom he had been brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and carefully instructed in the Jewish Scriptures. His father was a Greek. At Paul's second visit to Lystra, he found Timothy held in such high repute by the Church in that place, and so highly commended by the members of it, that he determined to associate him with himself and Silvanus. When present with him, Timothy acted as his minister; and on other occasions he was sent as his messenger, whenever any special occa-

sion required, to the various churches under the Apostle's care. His faithful discharge of these important duties endeared him still more to the Apostle, and obtained for him a good report in all the Churches. He was, therefore, a fitting person, both by education and experience, to be entrusted with the guardianship and management of the large and important church at Ephesus.

To strengthen him in that important work, as well in regard to the treatment of opponents and misguided brethren, as in respect of his own conduct as a Christian bishop, the Apostle, on his arrival in Macedonia, wrote the First Epistle to Timothy (A.D. 57).

This Epistle, therefore, like that to Titus, abounds with episcopal maxims, and directions to Timothy how to proceed in suppressing the various corruptions and perverse teachings of the disturbers of the Church entrusted to his charge, for Demetrius and his heathen associates were not the only adversaries of the truth—the Jewish leaven was at work, and caused dissensions and disturbances among the professors of the Christian faith.

The Apostle, not finding Titus, as he expected, at Troas (2 Cor. ii. 12), went from thence into Macedonia, where he encountered much tribulation from the dissensions of believers and the op-

position of infidels. His zealous soul, however, found some consolation and comfort from Titus, who came to him from the Church of Corinth, and having found him at Philippi, reported to him the gratifying effect of his letter to the believers in that city (2 Cor. vii. 5-7). Timothy had also followed him from Ephesus, and rejoined him at Philippi; from which place, filled with joy, but at the same time seeing the necessity of following up the effect already produced, he wrote and sent by Titus (viii. 16, 17) his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (A.D. 58), in which he commends their submission to his directions, rejoices in their faith, encourages them to further improvement, justifies his own apostolical authority, and exposes the corrupt reasoning and unjust pretensions of a false teacher, who still continued to pervert the minds of some and lead them from the truth. It is worthy of remark that the beginning of this Epistle indicates most clearly the time of its composition, by a touching reference to his escape from the turbulence which beset and drove him from Ephesus.

From Macedonia he proceeded, taking in his way Amphipolis, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, into Achaia, where he abode three months. During this sojourn he visited Corinth for the third time, according to his oft-repeated promise,

having visited them (A.D. 51) on occasion of their first conversion; and subsequently, on his way from Nicopolis to Syria, where we read of the proceedings of himself and Aquila at Cenchrea (A.D. 53).

He had intended to sail from Corinth to Syria, as he had done four years before, but was prevented by an ambush of the Jews. He was constrained, therefore, to return through Macedonia, having sent forward to Troas his companions, Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia (Acts, xx. 4). Luke had now rejoined him, having probably accompanied him from Philippi, where he had been left on the first visit of the Apostle to that place.

It was at this period, before leaving Corinth, that Paul composed his celebrated Epistle (A.D. 58) to the Romans, who consisted as well of Jewish as of Gentile converts. It is justly considered his most elaborate composition, abounding with the most impressive arguments, set forth in the noblest and most sublime diction. Addressed as well to Jews as Gentiles, it depicts the original depravity of man, which rendered both the Law of Moses and the wisdom of philosophy alike insufficient to salvation. Hence is deduced the necessity of faith in Christ as the only means of justification,

and the foundation of all moral and social duties, to the discharge of which he earnestly and affectionately exhorts all professors of the Gospel. The text or summary of the epistle may be considered as expressed in this, that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

There had remained with him in Corinth Timothy and Lucius, and Jason, and Gaius, and Sopater, and Aristarchus, and Secundus, who accompanied him thence to Philippi, from which place, after the days of unleavened bread, he sailed to Troas, which he reached in five days. Mention is here made of public worship on the first day of the week, which Christians call the Lord's day, and observe with solemnity as their Sabbath, being the memorial of the resurrection of their Lord and Master Jesus Christ. As, therefore, the first Sabbath after the creation was the memorial of the rest of Almighty God from the work which he had finished on the day preceding, and was, indeed, the first day of the complete world; so was the day of the resurrection the first of the rest of Jesus Christ from his work of redemption, in having "died for our sins, and risen again for our justification."

The first day of the week, which is the Christian Sabbath, is a remembrance one day in seven of

the great work of man's redemption, and forms, therefore, a fitting period for the observance of those duties of religion, which keep up a closer and more devout connexion between the redeemed and the Redeemer, between the created and the Creator. Hence the necessity of keeping this day holy; and hence we find not only reference to the assembling together of Christians for public communion of prayer and other religious exercises, in the Epistle to the Corinthians and in other passages of the New Testament; but during the stay of the Apostle and his company at Troas, we read of Paul's preaching unto the brethren, who had come together on the first day of the week to break bread. On this occasion of his preaching, which he lengthened out to a late period of the night, because he had many things to say unto them, being about to take his departure from them on the morrow, a young man named Eutychus, who had been overcome with sleep, fell from an elevated part of the building, and was taken up dead. The confusion which ensued was immediately quieted by Paul's assurance of his speedy restoration to life, which took place in his falling upon him, in the same manner as Elijah had done in respect of the son of the widow of Zarephtha, and Elisha with the child of the Shunamitish woman. (1 Kings, xvii. 21; 2 Kings, iv. 34). The Apostle

renewed his discourse, which continued until early dawn, and which must have been impressed more deeply upon the hearts of his hearers, from the comfort which they experienced in seeing their dead friend restored to the assembly in life.

On the following morning the Apostle sent forward Luke and the rest of his company by ship to Assos, to which he journeyed on foot. From Assos they all sailed together to Mitylene, in the island of Lesbos; from Mitylene the next day they reached Chios, famous for its wines. Their next stage was Samos; thence steering towards the Asiatic coast they reached Trogyllium, where they made a short sojourn. Resuming their voyage, in one day they reached the famous city of Miletus. It had been the purpose of the Apostle to proceed from Miletus to Ephesus, but finding that he had not sufficient time to fulfil that purpose, and be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, which he much desired, he sent to Ephesus, and summoned the Elders of the Church to come to him there. These Elders were the Overseers or Bishops of the several congregations, over which they had been appointed either by the Apostle during his residence among them, or by Timothy, whom he left behind him, charged with instructions to lay hands suddenly on no man, when he departed to visit Macedonia.

These Elders are addressed by the Apostle as Bishops, yet it appears he held an authority superior to them, for he commanded their attendance and they obeyed his summons. His address to them—his parting farewell—was touchingly affectionate, full of devout warning and holy caution. The simple narrative of the sympathy between Paul and the Ephesian Elders is thus beautifully given by an eye-witness: “He kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him ; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.”

CHAPTER XVI.

A.D. 58.

ACTS XXI. XXII. XXIII.

Tyre.—Ptolemais.—Philip and his Daughters.—Agabus.—Cæsarea.—Arrival at Jerusalem.—Alms delivered by Paul.—Performance of a Vow in the Temple.—An Uproar of the Asiatic Jews.—Paul rescued by the Roman Guard.—The Sanhedrim divided in Opinion.—A Divine Vision to Paul by Night.—His Departure from Jerusalem, and Arrival at Cæsarea.

WITH difficulty Paul and his company were separated from their sorrowing brethren of the continent of Asia, so affectionately desirous were they to linger his departure, by the expression of their devoted attachment to him whose zeal they had witnessed in the cause of Christ, and whose tender concern for their welfare, and the future interests of the churches established among them, they had seen and experienced. The whole force of this now flooded their hearts and minds in this their hour of parting—parting for ever in this world from one so beloved, so honoured, who, in his own conduct, gave a lively proof of his personification

of their Master's words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

From Miletus the apostolic company sailed to the islands Coos and Rhodes, and to Patara on the continent not far from Myra, in Lycia. Here they found a vessel ready to sail into Phœnicia. In this they embarked, and skirting the island of Cyprus on their left, they reached the country of Syria, and landed at Tyre, where they remained seven days.

The maritime part of Syria, with a slight exception on the north, is called Phœnicia, famous for its culture of navigation antecedent to all other nations, and for its consequent advancement in science and the works of art. A Phœnician, Cadmus, the reputed founder of Thebes in Bœotia, has the honour of being considered the inventor of letters, and to Phœnician or Tyrian artists was intrusted the management of those glorious works, which rendered the Temple built by Solomon at Jerusalem the wonder of surrounding nations. Tyre itself was the most celebrated place of commerce mentioned in ancient history. A sacred penman has described her merchants as princes. It was from this neighbourhood that the woman came, whose faith drew from the Saviour his approving commendation, and the working of a miracle for the benefit of her daughter. There

had been, at the time of the Apostle's visit, already established at Tyre a community of brethren, some of whom foretold to Paul the danger he would encounter in going up to Jerusalem, and dissuaded him from continuing his journey. But the appearance of danger daunted not the Apostle. He had already experienced that in every city bonds and imprisonment awaited him; but a necessity was laid on him to preach the Gospel. He could not draw back. He held not his own life dear unto himself. A greater woe would fall upon his drawing back than upon his going forward. At the end of his faithful service, however laborious and beset with difficulties and dangers, was placed a crown of life, the reward of well-doing; and the course between was sweetened and encouraged by the present comfort and consolation of heart, arising from a consciousness of duty performed, which the world could neither give nor take away. Could he then forego such present comforts and the prospect of such future glory, though bought by afflictions, and stripes, and death, by yielding to a cowardly spirit, the indulgence of which might possibly screen him from outward persecutions, but could not shelter him from the worm of conscious scorn and contempt, which would have gnawed his inmost soul, as the reward here of treachery and cowardice,

and that still more bitter portion hereafter laid up for blasphemers and workers of iniquity before God? He, therefore, stood inflexible to their entreaties, though flowing from truth, and urged with all the intense interest of brotherly kindness.

The departure of the Apostle from Tyre was attended by a like display of affectionate sympathy which had so beautifully marked his separation from the episcopal conclave at Miletus. So much was he endeared to the brethren at Tyre, that not only men and women, but even children, accompanied him and his friends on their way to the ship. Who shall say that those children had not put on Christ by baptism, or that the remembrance of that parting scene would have no influence on the days of the years of their maturer age, confirming their faith, and consoling them in the trials which awaited their Christian course!

The Tyrian brethren “returned home again,” whilst Paul and Luke and their companions proceeded onward to Ptolemais, which derived its name from the designation of the kings of Egypt, who were called Ptolemies, as the Roman emperors were surnamed Cæsars. Its ancient name was Accho (Judges i. 31), from which may have been derived its modern one of Acre by the Turks, and Akka by the Arabs. During the Crusades it was the scene of many a bloody exploit, and in

modern days of a remarkable one in which Sir Sidney Smith so mainly contributed to the defeat of Buonaparte, by which his hitherto victorious career in Egypt and Syria was averted, and himself compelled to return a lonely fugitive to Europe.

From Ptolemais the apostolic company proceeded to Cæsarea, where they took up their abode in the house of Philip the Evangelist, who had been ordained Deacon by the Apostles, and by whom the eunuch had been converted at Azotus after the dispersion of the brethren from Jerusalem on the persecution by Saul. We see here the healing influence of the Christian faith. Philip, fourteen years before, had been compelled to flee for his life from Jerusalem, in consequence of the fiery spirit of persecution shewn by the very man whom he now received under his roof; but oh, how changed! Then a persecutor, breathing out nothing but slaughter and imprisonment; now, on all hands himself beset by persecution, and the object of the desolating vengeance of that party whose advocate and instrument of cruelty he had formerly delighted to be. During his sojourn with Philip, who had four virgin daughters gifted with the spirit of prophecy, there came a certain prophet from Judea, whose name was Agabus. This man, by a significant action with Paul's

girdle, foretold his imprisonment at Jerusalem, and consequent transfer to the jurisdiction of the Gentiles. This intimation caused a renewal of the entreaty which had been so affectionately urged upon him at Tyre, that he would not go up to Jerusalem, but with the same result: nay, though the entreaty was seconded by Luke and those who accompanied him, the Apostle was not to be diverted from his purpose even by tears. "What mean ye," said he, "to weep and break mine heart, for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus?"

It is remarked of grief that it is infectious. Courage is not less so; more especially that courage which is of the soul, producing a cheerful resignation under all circumstances, and which despises not life, however it fears not death.

Philip, and Luke, and Agabus, and the rest, seeing the fixed resolve of the Apostle, ceased from their importunity, and shewed the spirit by which they were actuated, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

The short period from his arrival at Miletus, to his departure from Cæsarea, must be considered as a peculiar part of the Apostle's career. It was one high and unclouded sunshine of affectionate zeal displayed towards him wherever he went.

It is as difficult to bear such sunshine with equanimity, as to brave the clouds of persecution, such as had hung on his head and darkened his steps for months and years before. But if in persecution we find him undismayed, so in the calm of enjoyment he is true to his purpose; and in both bent only on doing good to others, in imitation of the conduct of his Great Exemplar, whose servants he had persecuted and name blasphemed, but whose Gospel he had preached, and whose followers were now dearer to him than his own life.

After tarrying seven days at Cæsarea, the apostolic company resumed their journey, travelling by land to Jerusalem, accompanied also by some of the brethren at Cæsarea and an old disciple from Cyprus, called Mnason, who had a house in the holy city in which they were to lodge.

Their arrival at Jerusalem was a source of gladness to the brethren residing there. On the day following, Paul and his friends went into an assembly of the elders presided over by James, bishop of Jerusalem. In his Epistle to the Romans (xv. 31) he had asked for their prayers, that "his service which he had for Jerusalem might be accepted of the saints." That service, consisting of the alms which the Gentile converts had intrusted to him for the relief of their brethren of the circumcision, he now gladly ren-

dered, together with an account of his various journeyings to and fro, his labours and preaching, and “particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.” This account they received with that joy which caused them to glorify the Lord. But in order that the good which had been done might not be evil spoken of by those of the bigoted Jews, who had not yet learned that the Christian profession is a law of liberty, they suggested to Paul an expedient, which they thought calculated to mitigate their rancour and disarm their prejudice. The Jews were much addicted to vows and ceremonies. They entertained, therefore, a strong hostility towards him because of his open and uncompromising advocacy of the law of liberty—mingling in their charge against him truth and falsehood. Whatever, therefore, could be done by the Apostle which, without compromising any principle or running counter to any expressed declaration, might tend to undeceive their prejudices, and prove the fallacy of their accusation, it became the duty not only of the assembly to suggest, but of the Apostle to perform. Accordingly, with all readiness, he followed their advice; in the performance of which, whilst he was present in the Temple, according to the Law of Moses, the Asiatic Jews who had been his persecutors in the

various cities of that continent in which he had planted churches, raised a disturbance against him, and laying hands on him accused him not only of blasphemy, but of polluting the Temple by introducing Greeks into it.

In the commotion which ensued, Paul was dragged out of the Temple, the gates of which were immediately shut. The interposition of the Romans saved him from impending death ; but not from fetters, for as a common malefactor he was bound with two chains at the command of the chief captain. The Roman garrison was kept in a castle which communicated with the Temple by a staircase. To this castle he was being conducted amid the discordant clamour of his adversaries, when the press of the people was so great against him, that the soldiers were under the necessity of carrying the prisoner in their arms to save him from the violence of those who pursued him with furious rancour.

Before, however, he reached the castle, he obtained permission of the chief captain, to whom he had made known his country, to speak to the people, whom he addressed in the Hebrew tongue, as men, brethren, and fathers. His declaration of his former life as a persecutor of that faith to which he was afterwards specially called, that he might be sent unto the Gentiles,

was listened to with forbearance, until he made mention of the Gentiles. His allusion to them roused again the angry passions of his countrymen, and renewed the commotion so violently against him, that the chief captain, judging from his unsuccessful attempt to appease them, that he was, as he had previously intimated to him his suspicion, a factious demagogue and stirrer up of sedition, ordered him to be examined by scourging. It was not lawful to scourge a Roman citizen. The Apostle, therefore, pleaded this immunity in virtue of his birth, being a native of Tarsus, the inhabitants of which enjoyed the rights and privileges of Roman citizens,—a prerogative bestowed upon them by Julius Cæsar, as a reward for their services to him. This declaration had the effect of staying the scourging, and obtaining for him greater consideration from the Roman commander, who, on the following day, loosed him from his fetters, and brought him into the presence of the Jewish Sanhedrim, whom he had called together for the purpose of knowing the certainty wherefore he was accused by the Jews.

As he was proceeding to protest his innocence, he was commanded by the high-priest to be struck on the mouth. This high-priest, Ananias, was a person of great cruelty, acting, at all times, rather from the impulse of a tyrannical disposition

than from the principles of prudence and justice. He had been dispossessed of his office about the fourth year of Claudius Cæsar, about the time of the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem (A.D. 49), and sent prisoner to Rome. His successor was Jonathan, who was now dead, having been lately murdered by command of Felix the Roman governor; and as the office had not yet been filled up, Ananias, at this juncture, took upon himself the presidency of the Sanhedrim, and acted as high-priest of his own accord. This circumstance may account for Paul's not acknowledging him in that office, and for rebuking him for conduct unbecoming a judge, for he could not recognize him or his authority, who having been once displaced had not again been formally restored to it.

The earnest gaze with which the Apostle had scrutinized the members of the Council on his entrance, enabled him to judge of their characters and peculiar opinions. Some of them were probably well known to him in his former days, part being Pharisees and part Sadducees. With great address he took advantage of this circumstance, and thereby gave an evidence that even the perfection of innocence should not render us regardless of the exercise of common prudence and the advantages of incidental circumstances. His declaration that he was a Pharisee, and that

on account of his belief in the resurrection of the dead he was then called in question, produced a sensation in his favour by dividing the assembly, and gaining the favour of the Pharisees, who warmly protested his innocency and claimed attention to him, as one "to whom a spirit or an angel had spoken." But this avowal was in direct opposition to the Sadducees, who deny, not only the resurrection, but also the agency of angels and spirits, and, therefore, incensed them the more against him. So great was the dissension which arose in the assembly that the chief captain, fearing for Paul's safety, commanded his soldiers to interfere and carry him back to the castle.

The effect of this scene of uproar, which by affording another proof of the undying spirit of revenge and gross corruption by which his countrymen were actuated, might have had a depressing influence on his heart and spirit, was counteracted by a vision, which on the night following appeared and bade him be of good cheer, and pointed out to him the office which awaited him at Rome. At Corinth, when he had been thwarted and persecuted (A.D. 52) by his countrymen, a vision reassured his confidence, and heartened him to persevere; so now at Jerusalem, the favouring approbation of his Divine Master was not wanting. It visited him in prison, and filled him with

confidence when all around him appeared cheerless and void of hope. And truly such evidence of the protection of the Most High was needed, for not only was there the remembrance of the scenes of the two last days to make sad the soul of him who could wish himself accursed for his brethren's sake, but the morning had scarcely risen before he was apprised of a conspiracy of more than forty persons, who had bound themselves by a horrible oath to destroy him. The existence of this unholy league was revealed to him by his sister's son, who being brought at Paul's request by one of the centurions into the presence of Lysias the chief captain, disclosed to him the conspiracy, the plan of which was to set upon him on his way from the castle to the council-chamber of the Sanhedrim.

As Lysias was anxious to avoid occasion of a popular tumult, as well as to protect the Apostle, he immediately gave him into the custody of two centurions, charging them to conduct him in safety to Cæsarea, with a guard of two hundred spearmen and seventy horse-soldiers. They left Jerusalem the same evening at nine o'clock, and having reached Antipatris in safety on the following day, part of the escort, consisting of the foot-soldiers, left them. Antipatris, so named by Herod the Great in honour of his father Antipater, was about forty miles distant from the Holy City.

Resuming their journey on the morrow, the horsemen conducted him in safety to Cæsarea, which was about thirty miles further. There, together with an epistle from Claudius Lysias, their captain, they delivered Paul to Felix, the Roman governor, who, after asking him a few questions, “commanded him to be kept in Herod’s judgment-hall.”

CHAPTER XVII.

A.D. 58-60.

ACTS XXIV. XXV. XXVI.

Tertullus accuses Paul before Felix.—Drusilla.—Paul's Defence.—Festus.—Paul again accused.—Appeals unto Cæsar.—Herod Agrippa and Bernice.—His Appeal confirmed.

THE sunshine of private affection which had brightened the Apostle's passage from Miletus to Cæsarea, had soon been succeeded by storm and tempests. He had scarcely reached Jerusalem before that which his Tyrian friends and Agabus had foretold, burst upon him. His countrymen were insatiate for his blood. Their self-assumed high-priest violated the dignity of the judgment-seat; the people from places afar off stirred up the commotion against him; the populace of Jerusalem abetted their violence, and more than forty private individuals leagued together under a horrible vow to take away his life. His innocence could not screen him from accusation; and his prudence, however it had served to avert instant con-

demnation, could not effect his deliverance from bonds. But "the God of Hosts was with him ; the God of Jacob was his refuge." A way of release had been opened from the violence of persecution and the dangers of intrigue, and that, too, through the agency of those who sat as conquerors in the strongholds of his country, and wielded not only the spear of Conquest but the sword of Justice.

His prerogative of Roman citizenship had procured for him his safe removal from Jerusalem. The scene of his trial is now changed, but not the passions of his accusers ; for malice knows no bounds, revenge no fulness. He was protected by Roman superintendence from bodily harm by open violence or secret plotting. But he was called upon to make his defence in public against his inveterate accusers ; for on the fifth day after his arrival at Cæsarea, Ananias, with the elders and a hired orator named Tertullus, came down from Jerusalem, and laid their information against him before the governor Felix. Tertullus was a well-practised pleader, whose talents were at the command of his employers, whether for the advancement of justice or the persecution of innocence.

Ananias and the Sadducean members of the Council, Paul's most inveterate enemies, were

aware of the Apostle's power of speech and strength of character, both of which received additional weight and force from his innocency of conduct and integrity of purpose. To counteract the influence of these several promising circumstances, they had recourse to the rhetorical pleadings of a certain orator, named Tertullus, who, whilst with hacknied compliments he endeavoured to conciliate the favour of the governor, spared not, in rude language, to lay his accusation against the captive. His address betrays at once the inconsistency of the hired, unscrupulous pleader; for whilst he flattered Felix, before whom he stood, he spared not the conduct of Lysias, the chief captain, who remained in Jerusalem, and whose timely interference in behalf of the calumniated Apostle had incurred the rancorous displeasure of the Jews. This they testified by their approving before the governor all that their orator had addressed to him.

As soon as Tertullus had ceased, and the Jews had expressed their assent to his pleading and charge as well against Paul as the chief captain, permission was given to the accused to speak for himself; and readily and well did he plead his own cause. He who had refused to recognise the authority of the high-priest who presided over the Council of his own nation, because he

deemed his but an usurped office, without hesitation paid deference to the Roman governor. He rendered unto Cæsar and Cæsar's deputy the honour due to their station, although that station placed them over his subjugated country; in the same manner as his Divine Master had acknowledged the duty of paying tribute, even by performing a miracle to supply him with the means of doing so.

The Apostle's defence of himself was at once simple and dignified, clear and explicit. He disguised no part of his conduct, offered no compromise of his principles, made no recrimination against his accusers. The doctrine of the resurrection he avowed again and again, as being that to which his accusers, the Sadducees, were most opposed, and that distinguishing feature of the Gospel, on the confirmation of which depended the whole truth of the Christian dispensation.

The force of his defence may be gathered from the circumstance that Felix broke up the court, and deferred the re-hearing of the cause until an opportunity should occur of bringing Lysias, who had been an eye-witness of the uproar, down from Jerusalem. The governor appears to have made this but a pretext, in order to appease the violence of the Jews, for so convinced did he appear both of their injustice and Paul's blameless

conduct, that he commissioned a centurion to protect him against their machinations, allowing him full liberty and affording a free access to his friends and acquaintances, amongst whom might be Philip the Deacon, and Cornelius the devout centurion, who entertained St. Peter about eighteen years before. Nor was this all; something in the Apostle's address or doctrine had made an impression upon Felix, for on one occasion, when his Jewish wife Drusilla was with him at Cæsarea, he sent for Paul, and "heard him concerning the faith in Christ."

The character of Drusilla, who is called a Jewess, may be inferred from the fact mentioned by Josephus, of her having abandoned her former husband Azizus, king of the Emesenes, who, for her sake, had submitted to undergo the rite of circumcision, and attached herself to Felix, chiefly, it is said, through the devices of one Simon a Jew, who pretended to magic arts. She is said to have possessed extraordinary beauty. She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa, and sister of that Agrippa who, subsequent to these events, came to pay a complimentary visit to Festus, on occasion of his being appointed to the province of Judea. This Drusilla also was the second of that name whom Felix had married; for we learn from the Roman historian Tacitus, that he had previously

had to wife Drusilla, a grand-daughter of the dissolute Marc Antony and the voluptuous Cleopatra, queen of Egypt.

Knowing, therefore, the character and peculiar vices of his hearers, the Apostle, with his usual discrimination and adherence to truth, addressed them. The past, the present, and the future were alike subjects of his discourse. He spake of righteousness, in which he must have explained the faith of the Lord our Righteousness. He spake of temperance, in which, whilst expounding the maxims and principles of Gospel holiness, he must have reproved the peculiar vices of his auditors. He spake of judgment to come; the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust — to these the portion of undying misery, to those the inheritance of everlasting life, pleasures for evermore at the right hand of God. And he spake and warned with such force and truth, that “Felix trembled.” Great cause had he to tremble, and, struck with a consciousness of his own unholy crimes, shrink from the application of that reasoning. But words of truth are ever eloquent; and whilst Felix trembled, he could not but admire the charm and influence of the speaker’s reasoning. Hence his wavering conduct. Ashamed to admit the whole truth, yet not willing to close his ears against its cogent

advocacy, he dismissed him for the present, purposing to hear him again when he might have "a convenient season." But although he did find many opportunities of holding communion with him during the two years he detained the Apostle as his prisoner, the convenient season of repentance from his lust, injustice, and oppression, never came. His kindness, however, did not abate towards him. Still not even the eloquent reasoning of Paul could win him over to the faith of Christ, so strongly did the god of this world hold possession of his heart. His ruling passion of avarice, by which he might minister to his gross appetites, prevailed over better impressions, so that when he was recalled from his government (A.D. 60) "he left Paul bound."

He had outraged the feelings of the Jews on many occasions by extortion and injustice, until he was, on their repeated representations to the Emperor, called upon to answer for his conduct before his imperial master. Instead, therefore, either of liberating the prisoner, or sending for Lysias to receive his evidence, in order that he might bring the trial to a fair and just conclusion, he resolved to leave Paul, against whom he was aware many of the Jews were greatly hostile, hoping by that sacrifice to their passions to do them a pleasure, and thereby palliate their enmity.

But even this concession to expediency (and when, indeed, do such concessions ever bear good fruit?) did not accomplish what he desired; for his enemies followed him to Rome with clamorous accusations, and would have succeeded in obtaining his punishment, had it not been for the intervention of his brother Pallas, who at that time possessed great influence at the imperial court.

The successor of Felix was Porcius Festus. The seat of his government was Cæsarea. On his arrival from Rome he remained there three days, and then proceeded to visit Jerusalem, the capital city of the people whom he came to govern. He had scarcely arrived in the Holy City before the passions of Paul's accusers, repressed for two years by the protection which Felix had afforded him, again burst out, and caused them to bring their accusation against the Apostle before him. Time had abated neither their enmity nor their treachery. The spirit of the same conspiracy by which so many had banded together to slay him in Jerusalem, when he was rescued by the promptitude of Lysias, was not diminished. They, therefore, urged upon Festus, their new governor, the expediency of fetching Paul from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, on the plea of affording him the opportunity of impartial justice, whilst their real design was to lay an ambush for him in the way to kill

him. It was but a portion of that same treacherous design which had induced them, two years before, to lay a plot for slaying him in the passage from his prison in the castle to the hall of the Sanhedrim, to which they had requested that he might be conveyed.

Their present design appeared to offer an easy fulfilment, because in the distance from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, nearly seventy miles, there were many spots favourable to such attempts. They were, however, baffled by the prudence and firmness of Festus, who might probably have received some intimation from his predecessor respecting the prisoner. For we may easily imagine, that although for political and private purposes Felix might be willing outwardly to do the Jews a pleasure in detaining a prisoner, against whom the hatred of the chief men of the Jews was directed, he might yet have such regard for his character and powers as to make in private to him a favourable representation of his case. And what more favourable statement could be made, than a plain detail of the simple facts which had come under his own notice? Festus, therefore, instead of acceding to their request, declared his resolution to keep Paul at Cæsarea, to which place he himself was about to return, and directed his accusers to accompany him for the purpose of bringing him

to trial. After a sojourn of ten days at Jerusalem, the governor accompanied by the accusing Jews returned to his seat of power, and on the day following his arrival he commanded Paul to be brought before his tribunal, as two years before he had been commanded to stand before that of Felix.

That long interval, spent in honourable confinement, had neither abated his vigour nor relaxed the malicious spirit of his persecutors. They urged many and grievous complaints against him, not one of which they could prove. They had malice to prosecute, they wanted power to convict. They came round him like bees deprived of their stings, for innocence was his shield, injustice their reputation. What a contrast to their groundless but malicious accusation does the simple but dignified answer of Paul display! And how must his persecutors have quailed before its power, when he answered for himself: "Neither against the Law of the Jews, neither against the Temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended any thing at all."

But this calm, energetic assertion of innocence against charges which could not be proved, was not more admirable in covering the Jews with shame and confusion of face, than in his prompt and manly rejoinder to Festus, when, out of favour

to the Jews, he had proposed that the prisoner should go up to Jerusalem, and "there be judged of these things before him." It reminded, in terms of boldness but refined courtesy, the governor of his duty, as the representative of Cæsar, the head of that nation which paid the most prompt attention to justice in behalf of all its citizens, one of whom Paul was. It re-asserted his innocence, whilst at the same time it did not deprecate death as the desert of crime. It challenged acquittal for innocence, in defiance of the power of any one. "I stand," said he, "at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou very well knowest: for if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, *no man* may deliver me unto them." Then, as if to relieve the governor from his struggle between the dictates of justice and his inclination towards popular favour, and in the exercise of that political privilege which he had derived from his birth in the city of Tarsus, he added, "I appeal unto Cæsar." This appeal took the jurisdiction of the case out of the power of Festus, by transferring it to a higher tribunal. It was a privilege not merely granted to Roman citizens, but strictly enforced

and guarded by the Julian law.* Nay, so sacred was this privilege held by Pliny, the Roman governor under Trajan, that the right of citizenship prevailed over the enormity of being a Christian, and obtained for the persecuted worshippers of Jesus, who, like Paul, were citizens of Rome, a suspension from those sufferings which their brethren who were devoid of this privilege were exposed to undergo in the Trajan persecution. For, writing unto his imperial master in respect of the persecuted Christians, he states: "Others also were guilty of like foolishness, whom, because they were Roman citizens, I have determined to send to the city," that is, to Rome, that they might have the opportunity of being heard by the Emperor himself.

When, therefore, St. Paul made this appeal, he appears to have perplexed Festus; for it was not until he had conferred with his council, consisting of his principal friends and captains, that he replied, "Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? Unto Cæsar shalt thou go!"

But as it was not always that an immediate

* The terms of the Julian law were, that no governor or magistrate should slay or order to be slain, or should torture or beat, or command to be committed to prison, any Roman citizen who appealed to the Emperor.

opportunity occurred for sending Roman citizens to the imperial seat of government, to be heard in their defence, it was necessary for Festus to detain Paul some time at Cæsarea. In the meanwhile it happened that King Agrippa and Bernice came to salute the governor. This Agrippa, it is to be remembered, was the son of that Agrippa who, seventeen years before, "had killed James the brother of John with the sword," and stirred up a great persecution against St. Peter and the rest of the brotherhood (A.D. 43). On the decease of his father, who died a horrid death at Cæsarea in the year following that persecution, he was but seventeen years of age—too young to be entrusted with the care of the kingdom of Judea; which the Emperor Claudius therefore, acting upon the Roman principle, had immediately converted into a province. On the death, however, of his uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, the Emperor appointed him his successor in that kingdom, which he afterwards caused him to resign in exchange for a larger dominion in Judea and its adjacent districts. His sister Bernice, who accompanied him in this complimentary visit to Festus, had run nearly the same kind of dissolute career as her sister Drusilla, the second wife of Felix. She had first been married to her uncle the King of Chalcis; then to Polemon, king of Cilicia, who for her

sake, as Azizus had done for that of Drusilla, had become a proselyte to Judaism. Him she shortly afterwards abandoned, and was now living in a state of abomination with her brother Herod Agrippa. Subsequent to this visit her personal charms, which are said to have been of extraordinary beauty, attracted the attention of Titus Vespasian, who became so passionately enamoured of her, that but for the unequivocal manifestation of dislike by the Romans towards her, he would have made her empress.

These two grandchildren of Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa and Bernice, came, at this period of Paul's detention in honourable captivity as a Roman citizen, to visit Festus the Roman governor, their brother-in-law. Indebted for their rank and princely power to the favour of Nero, the royal master of Festus, prudent policy, as well perhaps as a due regard to his delegated authority, apart from their family connexion, led them to honour the deputy in a way which might be supposed to reflect deference and homage to their mutual benefactor.

During their visit the Roman governor mentioned to his Jewish friends and visitors the case of their countryman, and more especially made known to them the artifices and application of the chief priest and elders at Jerusalem for his sanc-

tion to put him to death, by delivering him over to judgment without trial. In respect of this unjust application we are reminded of the conduct of the same party in the case of our Saviour before Pontius Pilate. But in both instances the Roman sense of justice revolted from the cruelty of Jewish malice.

Agrippa had doubtlessly heard of Paul, his zeal, talents, and intrepid conduct. The mention of his name, therefore, could only serve to awaken in the Jewish prince a desire to hear so celebrated a character give an account of himself and the doctrines of that sect amongst his countrymen, whose success had so highly exasperated the feelings of the Sanhedrim. It was, therefore, a very natural consequence that he should take the earliest opportunity of indulging his desire; whilst it was equally a matter of interest for Festus to yield to his sister. Accordingly, on the very morning following the mentioning of Paul's case to the King, the Apostle was brought before the royal party; and after an introductory address by the Roman governor, in which was avowed his conviction of the prisoner's innocency, together with the unreasonableness of sending him to the Emperor without being able to specify any definite charge against him, Agrippa intimated to Paul that he was permitted to speak for himself.

The Apostle's speech on this occasion abounds with the truest eloquence. The hill of Mars had been charmed with his voice, pleading the revelation of the universal God and setting forth the beauty of Gospel truth, and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. The Herodian palace of Cæsarea now listened with mute attention to words which would have delighted, by their superiority, the ears of a Demosthenes and drawn down the admiration of a Cicero, and caused both the Greek and Roman orators to have confessed the more exalted powers of a Paul, as much superior to their own as the cause he advocated excelled those in which they had become pre-eminent, however stirring in their application and greatly important in their object; for, in all the recorded harangues of these two splendid orators—the respective ornaments of Greek and Roman eloquence—there is nothing to be found which may be brought into comparison with the plain, uncompromising, argumentative, courteous address of Paul to Agrippa.

Whether we take the simple and concise narrative of his “manner of life from his youth”—or his noble burst of argument in asserting the resurrection of the dead, which flashes forth with sudden and startling power—or the declaration of his own supernatural call from the darkened

bigotry of his former life to a career of trial and preaching, in obedience to "the heavenly vision"—or the avowal of his own experience of help from Him whose sufferings, death, and resurrection had formed the subjects of the prophecies of the Scriptures,—we are bound to yield to the Christian pleader the palm of unrivalled excellence. The superiority of his oratory does not consist in flowing epithets, or rounded periods, or studied phrases, or unmeaning compliments: it arises from a noble simplicity, energy of truth, unaffected candour, and the importance of those doctrines which distinguish the profession of Christianity from all other modes and systems of religion. The earnestness of the speaker may be inferred from the exclamation of the Roman governor, who taxed him with madness; whilst the soundness of his principles is conspicuous in the reply, in which his appeal to Agrippa (who, as a Jew, was conversant with the Scriptures) was so turned and enforced, that as Felix, about two years before, trembled, so now Agrippa was constrained to confess, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!"

Great must have been the power of his eloquence to extort such a confession from the son of him who had so grievously persecuted the Church, and whose princely station de-

pended upon his profession of, and continuance in, the Jewish communion. But our admiration of the power of the Apostle's reasoning and eloquence is absorbed in that which forces itself upon our notice, from his quick and radiant manifestation of the true spirit of that faith which he stood forth to advocate, even in bonds. The consciousness of standing there, a prisoner in the presence of those whose decision might award him to instant death, and whose injustice towards him would be the means of obtaining popular favour, might have awed the proudest spirit into expressions calculated to avert displeasure ; whilst the wearisomeness of having already been more than two years a prisoner, debarred from mixing beyond the walls of his prison-house with friends and brethren, and thereby cutting him off from the opportunity of preaching Christ crucified to Jew and Gentile, might have tinged his feelings with asperity, and venomd his tongue with bitterness. Such would have been the effect upon ordinary characters ; but not so with St. Paul. In his application of the constrained admission of Agrippa there is no weak compliance to personal greatness, no harshness of words betraying a mortified spirit, no boasting exclamation affecting Stoic indifference. "I would to God," was his prompt reply, "that

not only thou (a Jew), but also all (Romans, therefore Gentiles) that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am (a Christian), except these bonds.”

If we were called upon to point out any one passage in the conduct of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth which embodies to the greatest extent the spirit of the doctrine which the Saviour taught, and of the example which he gave, the impassioned exclamation of Paul to Agrippa may be cited as that one passage. Collected courage, unruffled amenity, fearless avowal of his faith, the excellency of that love which his Master had enjoined as a new commandment, are concentrated in the few words in which he appeals to heaven for the greatest possible blessing, as well upon the princely and exalted, as upon the lowlier auditors, before whom he stood a prisoner; and as his heavenly Master with his dying breath entreated forgiveness for his executioners, and the first martyr Stephen prayed that the sin of his murder might not be laid to the charge of those who stoned him, so Paul appealed to heaven not only that they who heard him might be made true and sincere Christians, but Christians exempt from persecution, free from bonds.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A.D. 60, 61.

ACTS XXVI. 31; XXVII. ; XXVIII. to 15.

St. Paul sails for Rome.—His dangerous Voyage.—Shipwreck.
—Melita or Meleda.—Miracles.—Proceeds towards Rome
by Sicily.—Met by the Brethren.—The Apostolic Ovation.

WE have noticed the simple, energetic, and divine character of the appeal made by St. Paul before his political judge, the effect of which was to cause the royal personages of the Council to confer together, and to conclude in the words of St. Luke, "This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds." Agrippa, therefore, was constrained to intimate to Festus that, but for the prisoner's appeal to Cæsar, he might have been set at liberty. It was hence necessary that he should be sent to Rome; and thus did the ordinary incidents of the Roman tribunal, and the judgment of the highest and most noble of the Jewish princes, tend to bring about that event, which more than two years previously had been revealed to the Apostle from heaven, by providing

for him the means of his "bearing witness at Rome also" to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ever since his miraculous conversion to the Christian faith, and specific appointment to the apostolic office, he had preached the Gospel to Jew and Gentile as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." He had also visited almost every part of the known world : Asia, Syria, Macedonia, Corinth, Athens, Cyprus, and various parts of Palestine had been traversed by his steps, and made the scenes of unwearied labours (labours in the spiritual vintage—labours to minister to his own support and that of the brethren), and of his sufferings and trials, persecutions and bonds. Yet in all these places he had testified in the name of the Lord Jesus, calling upon men everywhere to repent and believe the Gospel. The smiles of success had not corrupted his sincerity, the frowns of persecution had not daunted his firmness ; they served, like the succession of day and night, only to invigorate his energies, and afford him so many opportunities of displaying in action what he so zealously advanced in doctrine. Cessation from the active and public advocacy of his faith, during the two years he had passed in captivity, had not cramped his energies nor slackened his zeal. As the eye of Moses was not dim through age, so neither was the tempered

fire of the Apostle's spirit abated by imprisonment. When, therefore, the opportunity of release presented itself, so that he might, by withdrawing his appeal, have gone forth and resumed his journey back to Antioch, which had hitherto been the termination of his evangelical progresses, the beginning and end of his spiritual enterprises, the point, as in a circle, from which he started and to which he fetched his compass back again, he did not avail himself of the indulgence. He had prayed that his judges and persecutors might become Christians in all things, like unto himself, except his bonds. But he was not ashamed of his bonds; it is true they might gall and chafe the outward man, but they could not enter into or restrain his soul: they were, in fact, ornaments more honoured on his hands than the knightly chain or princely diadem which sparkled on the persons of his auditors.

After his dismissal from the Council he was entrusted to the care of one Julius, a centurion of the Augustan band. This was a small, select body of Roman soldiers, forming part of the garrison of Cæsarea, which consisted at that time chiefly of Syrians. Josephus informs us that this select cohort had been employed by Cumanus, the predecessor of Felix, to quell an insurrection in the country; and their services had been retained by

Felix, from whom they were transferred to the command of Festus. The fact of their being a tried cohort would recommend them to his notice, and point them out as agents most fitting to be employed in any service requiring trust and confidence. Hence their captain was selected as the most proper person, to whose care St. Paul and other state prisoners should be committed, to be conveyed to Rome. Under his convoy the Apostle set forth, accompanied by St. Luke, who records all these events as an eye-witness, and who, like Baruch with Jeremiah, went in and out to him, ministering to his wants, and acting as his messenger during his imprisonment. Nor were they the only believers : there accompanied them Aristarchus, a native of Thessalonica, whom in the Epistle to the Colossians St. Paul styles "his fellow-prisoner," and in that to Philemon, "his fellow-labourer;" and who, together with Gaius, the hospitable host of the Apostle and the whole Church, had been exposed to jeopardy in the tumult which arose against Paul at Ephesus (A.D. 56), having been his faithful companion on his journey through Macedonia to Troas, and through Asia to Jerusalem.

These embarked in a vessel belonging to Adramyttium, a port founded by an Athenian colony, a little to the south of Mount Ida in Troas. The course

of this vessel lay along the Syrian coast. Thence they touched at Sidon, where Julius and his escort landed and remained some days; during which time the Apostle had unrestrained permission to go unto his friends to refresh himself. He came to them, having suffered those same persecutions which they had foretold in his last visit, between two and three years before. Their former parting, which had been a most affectionate one, would cause their present welcome of him to be no less interesting. They beheld him amongst them once more, but a prisoner, bound on a voyage to Rome, ready to testify before the Emperor Nero his faith and the truth of the Gospel. Knowing the character of the Emperor for cruelty, they could not but apprehend danger to their beloved teacher; but knowing also the promise of support from Him by whom kings reign, their faith taught them submission, and in the consolation of hope they commended the Apostle to the keeping of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps.

From Sidon St. Paul set forth with his two friends, who voluntarily accompanied him in this his fourth journey, different, indeed, from his former ones; for whilst in them he went out either of his own accord or as he was moved by the Spirit, he was now under the constraint of bonds and the direction of others. They did not resume their voyage in

the vessel in which they had sailed from Cæsarea, but in another, which, instead of shaping its course directly towards the west, was driven, by the prevalence of a south-west wind, to bear up to the northward of Cyprus, through the Aulon Cilicius, described as being the Sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, until it reached Myra, a port of Lysia. The ruins of this place, now called Cacamo, present still a magnificent spectacle of former greatness. From this port, an Alexandrine vessel—one, probably, engaged in carrying on the traffic of corn and grain between Egypt and Puteoli in Italy—was on the point of sailing. Into this Julius put his prisoners and their friends, and embarked with them himself. The winds still continued adverse, so that with difficulty passing by Rhodes, famous for the Colossus of brass, one of the seven wonders of the world, they reached, after several days, Cnidus. Diverging from this point on account of the wind, they sailed in a southerly direction through the Carpathian Sea, until they came to the eastern side of Crete, over against the promontory of Salmone, anciently called Samonium. Having made this promontory, they then proceeded westward until they reached a place called the Fair Havens, adjoining the city of Lasea. But difficult as had been their voyage hitherto, it became more so from this point. The

autumnal equinox was near. At that period of the year the winds are boisterous, and the flows in the Mediterranean Sea, called the Michaelmas flows, are full of danger. St. Paul, aware of these circumstances, made known his apprehension of the risk which would be incurred if they persevered in their voyage at that season. But though Julius, the centurion, had treated the Apostle with great courtesy and kindness, he was more influenced by the experience of the owner and master of the vessel than by the advice and cautious prudence of his prisoner, more especially as the haven in which they were was not commodious to winter in. The counsel, therefore, which prevailed, was, that they should endeavour to reach Phenice, a port further to the south-west and north-west extremity of the island. Taking advantage, therefore, of a light breeze from the south, they left their moorings in the Fair Havens, and skirted the Cretan coast in the hope of reaching Phenice. But their hope was frustrated.

That part of the Mediterranean Sea in which they were now sailing is occasionally visited by a wind called Euroclydon (its modern name is *Levanter*), a kind of hurricane, blowing not always from the same point, but shifting impetuously and frequently from north-east to south-east. Overtaken by a violent hurricane of this

dangerous character, the ship became unmanageable, and the sailors were under the necessity of letting her drive. A little to the south of the western side of Crete, over against Phenice, lies a small island, which is called Clauda or Gaulos. It was near to this place that, after having been some time drifted by the force of the tempest, they had nearly lost their boat, which with difficulty they saved from being staved, by taking it up out of the water on to the deck. Their condition was now so bad, that they were constrained to avail themselves of every help which prudence could suggest or experience supply. But as all their skill availed not to keep the vessel in her course, they furled their sails and let her drive before the wind. Night came over them in this unmanageable state, and morning brought with it no alleviation of their danger. As, therefore, they were drifting in a place beset with quicksands, they lightened the vessel by throwing overboard the heavier part of the cargo that day, and on the following day even the tackling of the ship. Nor was this duty performed by the crew alone, for the passengers readily assisted them in the work, if haply by so doing they might escape from the danger which they were now constrained to encounter.

In this condition of doubt and danger for several

days they were tossed by the tempest, unblest by a ray of sunshine by day, or the glimmer of a star by night. So great was the stress of the storm upon them, and so bereft of hope were they, that they lost all relish for their food, which they cared not now to take regularly as before. Destruction threatened them on all hands. Around them the winds were boisterous, and the waves swelled in awful fury. They knew not where they were, nor, even if they could bear up against the pressure, but that the next moment might see them dashed upon the Syrtes, or quicksands, which lay between Crete and the African coast. In the midst of this horror of impending danger and growing despair, the servant of Him who "rides the tempest and directs the storm," stood up. His voice broke the awfulness of their situation, and, like a ray of sunshine flashing through the gathered darkness of the blackness of the heavens, it carried with it the first dawning of returning hope. The Apostle reminded them of his former warning, rather, perhaps, to induce them to give credit to what he was now about to say, than to reproach them for their imprudence. He bade them fear not; and he gave them reasons for believing, that though the ship would be wrecked and lost on a certain island, there would not be the loss of any man's life.

It was now the fourteenth night of their distress and danger, when, about midnight, certain appearances indicated to the sailors the proximity of land, the fact of which they soon clearly ascertained by the customary method of sounding. As they found themselves drifting towards the shore, ignorant of where they were, and with no light to assist their judgment or direct their course, they let down four anchors from the stern of the vessel, and earnestly longed for the return of day. In the meantime, alarmed by the danger to which they were exposed, the mariners, under plea of casting out other anchors from the forepart of the ship, made an attempt to escape by letting down the boat into the sea. Their attempt, however, was frustrated by the intervention of St. Paul, whose spirit and prudence had already been so conspicuous that he was now listened to with attention and regard. He appealed to the centurion and soldiers under his command, assuring them that the escape of the mariners would be attended with the loss of all their lives. Giving credit to his words, they prevented the possibility of escape by cutting the ropes of the boat which attached it to the vessel.

Morning now drew on; and as he had already encouraged the crew, and directed what was necessary to be done, so now the Apostle did not

abate in his endeavours to fit and prepare his fellow-voyagers for the coming wreck. He roused them to confidence by repeating the assurance of their safety ; and to his exhortation to them to take necessary refreshment, that they might be more equal to the arduous duties of the approaching light, he added his own example, by taking bread, giving thanks over it to God in the presence of them all, breaking it, and beginning to eat. Encouraged by this, the whole crew of 276 persons rallied their forlorn spirits and took some meat ; and strengthened by this, their first regular or full repast for fourteen successive days, they actively applied themselves to lighten the ship by casting out the remainder of the wheat, with which it was freighted, into the sea.

When day broke, it discovered to them a shore, and creek of some unknown country. It now became their object to enter this creek, in order to effect a landing ; but in their attempt to pass round, so as to make towards the shore, they struck upon a projecting ledge of sand, which had been washed together by the confluence of two currents, and formed the natural boundary of the harbour. The Apostle's prediction of their being wrecked was now verified ; but this did not obtain for him the reverence due to his forethought and example, for the soldiers, in the stern exercise of

military discipline, purposed to kill him and the rest of the prisoners. This cruel project was defeated by the humanity of the centurion, who appears to have entertained an especial regard for him. Taking, therefore, upon himself the risk of blame, which might attach to the military for allowing a prisoner to escape, if any should escape, he gave command, that all who could swim should commit themselves to the sea, and get to land, whilst the rest should save themselves by whatever means they could. Broken pieces of the stranded vessel and floating parts of the wreck served as so many vehicles of escape. The word had gone forth. The promise to the Apostle was, that not one of them should be lost; and that promise was realised to the full: for 276 persons, who had been in the vessel, escaped all of them safe to land.

Learned men are much divided in opinion whether the Melita mentioned by St. Luke, as the place where St. Paul and himself were wrecked in the Alexandrine vessel, is Malta, a cultivated island of importance lying between Italy and Africa, and now the seat of British government for the Ionian Islands, or Meleda, a smaller island near the centre of the Adriatic Gulf, off the Illyrian coast, notorious for the barbarism and piratical practices of its inhabitants, as

well as the unwholesomeness of its climate. The simple narrative accords best with the latter. But whether the island was Malta or Meleda, St. Paul and his companions having reached the land in safety, met with most humane treatment from the inhabitants; for they lighted a fire for them, to mitigate the effects of the rain which had now succeeded the tempest, and alleviate the coldness with which their limbs were benumbed from having been so long exposed to the sea.

An incident now occurred which turned their feelings of kindness into reverence and awe. The island of Meleda was rude and uncultivated, and had a few years before been nearly depopulated by the execution of an edict of Augustus, as a punishment for the piratical pursuits of its inhabitants. Its climate and want of cultivation rendered it a congenial place for the breed of vipers and other noxious reptiles. The natives who received the shipwrecked party had heaped together a quantity of wood, which when they lighted "a viper came out of the heat, and fastened on the hand of the Apostle." The venom of this reptile is so virulent that almost instant death follows its bite. When they saw this they concluded, according to their superstitious notions of retributive justice, that he must necessarily have been a murderer, or some notorious criminal,

whom Divine vengeance pursued, and permitted to escape the wreck that his punishment might become the more remarkable by this circumstance. How great then was their surprise, awed into admiration and reverence of him, whom they had just before looked upon as unfit to live, when, instead of falling down dead, they beheld him shake the reptile from his hand, unhurt and undismayed. Whilst their superstition converted the fancied murderer into a god, the Christians who were present would be reminded of the Divine promise, peculiarly bestowed upon the Apostles by their heavenly Master, when He said, —“ In My name shall they cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.” (Mark xvi. 17, 18.)

The truth of this was fulfilled, not only in respect of the Apostle’s escape from the viper, but by what also immediately followed. The report of this miracle attracted the attention and notice of one Publius, a chief man of the island, whose residence was not far from the place where this remarkable event had occurred. He took St. Paul and his company into his house, and for three days gave them hospitable entertainment. Nor did his courtesy and hospitality go unre-

warded. His father was suffering from dysentery, a malady common to such places, moist and uncultivated as was this barbarous island. When St. Paul knew of it, he went into the presence of the sufferer, and having laid his hand upon him, with prayer, healed him. The power of working miracles, which had been so conspicuous in Jerusalem, in Ephesus, and other cities which received the faith, was not limited to great and populous places. Who that reads in Appian the account of the devastation of this island a few years before by the Romans, as a punishment for the barbarous and lawless habits of the people, would suppose that the great Apostle of Jesus Christ should now become a sojourner in it, and that the manifestation of the power of the risen Saviour to work miracles, delegated to His ministers, should have been made in this unpromising region? And yet, not only was the father of Publius raised miraculously from the bed of fever and dysentery, but all the suffering children of mortality within the island were made to partake, on their application, of the same exercise of Divine power to be healed, during the three months of the sojourn amongst them of St. Paul and his two affectionate and devoted friends, Luke and Aristarchus. Nor were the inhabitants ungrateful for the favours bestowed upon them. They who had received

the shipwrecked strangers on their arrival with great kindness, honoured their benefactors with many honours, and, at their departure, loaded them with presents of such things as might be of service to them in their voyage.

The vessel in which they were wrecked was from Alexandria, and it so happened that another vessel from the same celebrated port had wintered in the island, driven probably to take refuge in it by the same tempest which had caused the wreck of the Apostle and his companions.* In this vessel, which bore the sign of "Castor and Pollux," heathen deities supposed to be particularly favourable to seafaring people, and known to us as forming the sign of "the Twins" in the zodiac, they set sail, after a sojourn of three months in the island. They first sailed to Syracuse, where they tarried three days—it might have been for some matters of business connected with the traffic of the ship, which may also account for the deviation of the voyage, as it did not lie directly between Meleda and Puteoli.

* There is a remarkable coincidence between the wreck of St. Paul and a similar event which happened the same year to Josephus, the Jewish historian. So coincident, indeed, are the circumstances, that it is no stretch of probability to suppose that the Historian and the Apostle were wrecked in one and the same vessel.

Syracuse was a celebrated city in Sicily, at one time said to have been twenty-two miles in circumference, and rivalling Carthage in riches. It was here that Archimedes, the celebrated geometrician, signalised himself by baffling for some time the Roman general, Marcellus, by his mechanical contrivances in defence of the city, B.C. 210. From Syracuse they proceeded to Rhegium, the most southerly point of that part of the Italian coast, and thence, after one day with a fair wind, on the next day they reached Puteoli. This town, lying a little to the west of Naples, was, together with Baiaë, built on the opposite side of a small bay, celebrated for the magnificent villas of the Roman nobility, who resorted much to these two delightful places, especially for the use of their hot baths. Here the Apostle found a small community of Christians, at whose request, and by permission of Julius, he remained with them seven days, during which sojourn he confirmed their faith, and filled them with godly counsel.

The remainder of the journey to Rome was performed by land. Tidings of Paul's coming had previously reached the brethren, some of whom came out to meet him as far as Appii Forum, about fifty-three miles from the city, whilst others awaited his approach at a place

called the Three Taverns, about thirty miles distant from it. These had received, more than two years before, a mark of his concern for them, and zeal for the purity of the Gospel truths and doctrine, in the epistle which he had sent to them from Corinth. They therefore embraced the earliest opportunity of shewing their affectionate regard to him, by coming out so far to meet and give him welcome. Their greeting could not but refresh his heart and cheer his spirits, tried by so long and dangerous a voyage after a lengthened captivity.

Behold him, then, advancing towards Rome along the Appian Way! His was a voluntary escort—very different, indeed, from many a proud pageant which had swept in gorgeous array along that celebrated road. But of all the princely captives who had graced the chariot-wheels of warriors, never did a more truly illustrious character pass along towards the Eternal City, as Rome was impiously called, than that victim of Jewish malice, Saul of Tarsus. Nor of the many illustrious conquerors who had entered their native city in all the majesty and pomp of hard-won triumphs or splendid ovations, loaded with the spoils of kingdoms and served by mighty kings,—sad spectacles of human vanity!—was there one whom the captive Apostle might envy, or with

whom wish to change his station. He was a prisoner, but his cause was truth ; an ambassador in bonds, but it was as an ambassador of the Sovereign Lord of all things. And the spoils of his warfare were not garments rolled in blood of the mangled dead ; they were spoils won from the great Enemy of Man, under the banner of the Captain of Salvation, who 'was the Prince of Peace, the Mighty God.

CHAPTER XIX.

A.D. 60-62.

ACTS XXVIII. 16-30.

Conference with the Jews at Rome. — Their Obduracy. — Epistle to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. — Onesimus. — Epistle to Philemon. — St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem. — His Catholic Epistle and Death.

ON St. Paul's arrival at the end of his long and dangerous voyage from Cæsarea to Rome, the centurion, whose treatment of his prisoner had been throughout courteous and considerate, delivered the rest of his charge to the captain of the guard, but obtained the favour for him to remain apart from the others, guarded only by a single soldier, to whom he was bound by a single chain. The Apostle is now at Rome, a prisoner. His desire to visit the converts in that celebrated city is now in part fulfilled. By the mysterious workings of Divine Providence, "whose ways are far above, out of our sight," he was brought to Rome, that he might testify of the name of Christ before kings and princes, but in bonds. But though a prisoner, kept within a limited and guarded space, no fetters could con-

fine the active workings of his soul for the welfare of others, and the promotion of that cause for which he not only was content, but rejoiced, to suffer.

He had not been more than three days in Rome before he availed himself of the permission of free ingress to him afforded to his friends, to send to the chiefs of the Jews residing in the city, anxious, according to his plan of addressing himself first to his countrymen, to explain to them his conduct, and make known his sentiments and doctrines, if by any means he might abate their prejudices and win them to Christ. They assembled at his request, and listened to his reasons for appearing thus in Rome, which he stated was not voluntary, but of constraint ; adding, however, that he had “not aught to accuse his nation of,” but that “for the hope of Israel he was bound with this chain.” When, therefore, they had intimated to him that they had never heard any harm of him, either by letter or personally, from their countrymen, they appointed a day on which they would be prepared to hear his opinion “concerning this sect, which (they averred) was every where spoken against.” On the day appointed many came to him to his lodgings ; and earnestly, from morning till evening, did the Apostle labour to explain and prove

to them out of the Law of Moses, and out of the Prophets, that the kingdom for which they so ardently longed was not a worldly but a spiritual one; and that the Messiah they expected was, and could be, none other than Jesus of Nazareth. In this way did he testify of the kingdom of God, and bear witness at Rome to the faith, and doctrine, and promises of his Divine Master.

The effect of this long address was various. Some of his countrymen believed, and became followers of Christ; whilst others were so blinded by prejudice and bigoted zeal, that they received not his testimony. When, therefore, a division arose amongst them, and the greater part were leaving the assembly offended with his doctrine, undaunted by their opposition, he applied to the unbelievers a prediction of Isaiah (vi. 9, 10), which the Saviour had employed on four different occasions, and which he himself had quoted in his Epistle to the Romans—descriptive of the wilful obstinacy of the Jewish nation. In applying the language of the prophet to his countrymen at Rome, he added also a declaration that it was the purpose of Almighty God to send that salvation to the Gentiles willing to hear it, which they, his once chosen people, blindly and ignorantly rejected and put from themselves, lest they should

be healed. The Jews then left him, but not without much reasoning among themselves, some attaching credit to what he had said, and others ridiculing and turning it into contempt. So disheartening was the commencement of the Apostle's imprisonment at Rome, in respect of the conversion of his countrymen.

But their obduracy and untoward conduct towards himself and his mission, however it grieved his heart, did not cause him to flag in spirit for the good of those who had already been called from the darkness of heathenism to the marvellous light of the Gospel of Truth. Cut off from the power of going about to do good, and constrained to limit his teaching to those who sought him out, and came to visit him in his prison-house, he nevertheless laboured earnestly, whenever opportunity offered, to convince the gainsayers, convert the unprejudiced, and confute the unbelievers. His residence of two years, though not marked with the stirring and active scenes which distinguished his career in Asia and Macedonia, is not only not devoid of interest, but evinces his unwearied zeal and temper in the cause of his heavenly Master; for the sacred historian informs us that "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto

him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”

During this period he made some converts, and wrote three epistles. It is, indeed, from these epistles he wrote at that time, and on other occasions, we derive much of the information which makes up the remainder of this narrative in respect of his further proceedings, as well as learn that he made some converts at Rome; amongst whom were persons of all ranks and degrees, from those high in the imperial household, even to a fugitive slave.

After he had been some time at Rome, residing in his own hired house, fettered to a Roman soldier who was his guard, he wrote his Epistle to the Church at Ephesus (A.D. 61). His object in writing that transcript of spiritual instruction appears to have been to establish the Ephesian believers in the Christian faith, to which they had been converted by his preaching whilst residing amongst them (A.D. 56, 57). As he could no longer be present to encourage them forward by his personal exhortation, “he describes to them in the most animating language the mercy of God, displayed in the calling of the Gentiles through faith in Christ, without their being subjected to the Law of Moses.” And as he could no

longer enforce his doctrines and instruction by the persuasive example of his own conduct among them, he points out, and calls upon them to manifest, "that holiness and consistency of life, in their various stations and callings, which is required of all who have received the knowledge of salvation."

Addressed as this epistle is to the Christians at Ephesus, who without distinction are all styled saints, it appears to have been designed for the use of others also, who are called the faithful in Christ Jesus. These might have been all those in Proconsular Asia, who had been converted to the faith by his preaching and ministration during his two years' residence at Ephesus; in respect of which it was said, "that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, both Jews and Greeks."

This is evident as well from the superscription, as the blessing with which the epistle concludes. We gather also from the contents of the epistle the cheering fact, that the Ephesians continued steadfast in their profession of the faith of the Lord Jesus, and gave evidence of that faith by their love to one another. It was transmitted to them by Tychichus, whom the Apostle calls "a beloved brother, and faithful minister of the Lord;" and who appears to have been intimate with him

at Rome, and trusted by him, as a person who could not only tell the Ephesians all things respecting himself, but who could also “comfort their hearts.”*

In the year A.D. 50, the Apostle had planted a Church at Philippi, the first-fruits of the Gospel in Europe, which he revisited some years subsequently: and so attached to him were its members, that of all who were his children in the faith, the Philippians appear to have acted towards him with the most filial affection and duty. In his various difficulties at Thessalonica and Corinth, the Philippians ministered to his wants, and sent him various supplies of money that he might not be burdensome to others, so as thereby to hinder the success of his mission. When, also, they heard of his imprisonment at Rome, they sent a present to him by Epaphroditus one of their ministers, as a token of their affection, and to relieve his necessities.

The Epistle to the Philippians, therefore, which he sent to them A.D. 61, in the second year of

* Ephesus was celebrated for the splendid Temple of Diana, and for the manufacture of military weapons. To the former of these the Apostle alludes when he speaks of the edifying or building up of the Christian Church, “built upon apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone;” and to the latter in his exhortation to the Ephesians, to use the weapons of the Spirit in their warfare of the Gospel.

his detention at Rome, was in testimony of his grateful sense of their affectionate kindness. It was superscribed by himself and Timothy, and addressed “to all the saints which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons ;” and transmitted to them on the return of their messenger Epaphroditus. It contains not only commendations to them for their affection towards himself—commendations unmixed with the alloy of any censure—and for their steadfastness in the truth of their profession, and unity, and emulation for the faith of the Gospel; but consolations and warnings also against the insidious and dangerous innovations of false teachers, of the leaven of the circumcision, who had begun to intermingle amongst them.

We gather from this epistle that Timothy was now associated with the Apostle; from which it would seem, that as soon as he had heard of his beloved master’s condition he came to minister to him during his captivity. We learn, also, that his detention at Rome, so far from being a hinderance to the spreading of the Gospel, had fallen out rather for the furtherance of it: “So that (says he) my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word

without fear." So manifest, indeed, were his bonds in the palace of Nero, the Roman emperor, that some of his household became converts to the truth, and united with him in his salutation to the brethren at Philippi.

Another body of Christians also, about this time, received an affectionate memorial of the Apostle's concern for their spiritual welfare. A church had been planted at Colosse, a city in Phrygia; but whether by St. Paul, or some one else, we know not for a certainty. But whether the Colossians had been converted by him, or, as it is probable, by some other Christian teacher, they had so affectionate a regard for him that when they heard of his detention at Rome they sent to him by Epaphras, one of their ministers, kind assurances of their interest in him, and of their love in the Spirit towards him.

It was in reply to their inquiries, and as a return for their sympathy, that the Apostle sent to them an epistle (A.D. 62). He selected for this office Tychichus, the same messenger whom he had made bearer of a similar address to the Ephesians in the previous year; who had returned to him from that mission. With Tychichus he associated also Onesimus, a fugitive slave, whom he had converted in his bonds. He sent these two, because Epaphras, who should have been the bearer of it,

had made himself so conspicuous at Rome by his zeal for the Gospel, that he had been cast into prison by the public magistrates, and thereby was prevented from returning to his charge at Colosse.

In this epistle the Apostle takes occasion to direct the attention of the Colossians to certain doctrines and duties, which had been oppugned by Judaizing professors, and other teachers who mixed up philosophy with revelation, and worldly inventions with spiritual truths. There had been, it would appear, a strange admixture of Judaism and heathen philosophy taught and inculcated at Colosse. The followers of Moses, in order to gain proselytes, had pretended to assimilate his teaching with the ascetic notions of Pythagoras and the angelic ministration of Plato, by alleging that both Plato and Pythagoras had drawn their several dogmas from the Jewish Scriptures. It became the object, therefore, of the Apostle to counteract such false teaching, subversive alike of the doctrine of the atonement and the various duties of the law of liberty brought in by the Gospel. Hence we find distinctly set forth as doctrines, redemption and forgiveness of sins through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; the supremacy of Christ, as Creator, “over all things that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or do-

minions, or principalities, or powers ;” and His pre-eminency over the Church, and the fulness of His Godhead.

In addition to these important doctrines, without which our faith is vain and worldly, the Apostle cautions the Colossians against the deceits of false philosophy and self-righteousness in the Pythagorean doctrine of the abstinence of meats and drinks, and the Platonic system of the voluntary worshipping of angels ; and concludes by exhorting them, as he had also done the Ephesians, to the performance of relative duties, the necessity of prayer, and of the acquisition of that wisdom which would enable them rightly to give an answer to every one, who might strive to withdraw them from the simplicity of that Saviour, who is “all in all.”

In this epistle, also, mention is made of several of the faithful and attached friends of the Apostle, who were with him at Rome ; not only of Timothy, in whose joint name this and the Epistle to the Philippians were written, but of Aristarchus, and Jesus surnamed Justus, and Luke, and Demas, and Mark-John, who had been a comfort to him. It is worthy of remark, that on account of the conduct of the last-named a separation had taken place between Paul and Barnabas, thirteen years before. That separation

had not alienated feelings of brotherhood; for, not only is Barnabas honourably mentioned by the Apostle on several occasions, but in respect of Mark, about whom there already had been some communications between himself and the Colossians, he commends him to their favourable notice and respect. After making honourable mention of their minister Epaphras, he directs the epistle to be read not only among them, but to the Church of the Laodiceans; and concludes by enjoining upon Archippus, who probably acted in the place of the absent Epaphras, the necessity of “taking heed to the ministry which he had received in the Lord, that he should fulfil it.”

All these letters, written during his detention at Rome, bear evident marks of the Apostle's zeal for the faith of Christ, and affection towards all who received it. The composition of them must have served to lighten the wearisomeness of his bonds, more especially as they were drawn from him, not because of reproof or disgrace, but in reply to affectionate inquiries respecting his affairs, and because of the lively interest manifested towards him by those to whom they were written. Hence they became public documents of the greatest importance; not merely as testimonials of the good feeling existing between himself and them, but as records of revealed truths,

important standards of the doctrines, holiness, and discipline of the Church of Christ at that period.

The Apostle's zeal for churches did not render him insensible to the claims of individuals. Mention has been made of Onesimus, a fugitive slave, who had been the property of Philemon, a rich person, and a distinguished citizen of Colosse. This Onesimus had given the Apostle such satisfactory evidences of his sincerity and steadfastness in the Gospel, that he not only associated him with Tychichus as messenger and bearer of his Epistle to the Colossians, but he wrote a letter to his injured master, whose servitude he had fled, to ask that he might be received back into his former service—that of a slave. For such was the sincerity of Onesimus, that having embraced Christianity, and being made sensible of his fault in absconding from the house of Philemon, he did not hesitate to surrender himself to his master, although that master, by the law or custom of Phrygia, possessed over him the power of life and death.*

To conciliate that master's favour, who was

* We have no precise account whether Philemon received back the fugitive in the way required by the Apostle, although the probability is that, acting up to his Christian profession, he not only pardoned but gave him his freedom. Mention is

under important obligations to the Apostle, and to mark his sense of the honesty and good conduct of Onesimus, whom, though a slave, he considered as “a son,” and “brother beloved,” he wrote the short Epistle to Philemon (A.D. 62), to induce him to take back the fugitive, and receive him with the same regard as he would have received himself.

If the Apostle's Ecclesiastical Epistles shew great strength of argument, impartiality of doctrine, and soundness of speech, this private letter is no less distinguished for delicacy of sentiment, warmth of friendship, genuine liberality, and loftiness of mind. It may, indeed, be considered a perfect specimen of that true spirit of courtesy and beneficence, which is the best ornament of the private individual in every rank and situation of life.

The letter to Philemon was written by St. Paul, a little while before his liberation from bonds at Rome, contemporaneously with an epistle written and sent forth to the Jewish converts of the twelve tribes by James, bishop of Jerusalem. He is called James the Less, to distinguish him from

made of an Onesimus as Bishop of Ephesus, by Ignatius (A.D. 107). “The Apostolical Constitutions,” compiled in the fourth century, record him as having been Bishop of the Bereans; whilst other records state that he suffered martyrdom at Rome.

James the son of Zebedee, brother of St. John, one of the Boanerges, or sons of thunder, who was slain in the Herodian persecution (A.D. 43). He is also called the brother of our Lord, either because he was the son, as some suppose, of Mary the wife of Cleopas, and sister of Mary our Lord's mother; or, as others conjecture, because he was the son by a former wife of Joseph, the reputed father of our Lord. Many circumstances, recorded in the apostolic history and epistles, point him out as the head of the Church at Jerusalem, which was the first-fruits of the Gospel vintage, consisting almost, if not entirely, of Jews. Thus, when St. Peter was liberated, the first message of that deliverance was sent to James. When the First General Council sat, it was the authority of James, as president, which decided the controversy. When Saul came up to Jerusalem, he was immediately brought by Barnabas to James. A message from James to St. Peter at Antioch, produced that change in his conduct which caused St. Paul to rebuke him, because he was to be blamed.

Thus distinguished as the head of the Jewish Christian Church, he wrote an epistle, called a Catholic or Universal Epistle, from its being addressed, not as those of St. Paul to believers of a certain place or country, but to Christians in general, or to

all the Christians of “the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad.” It was rendered necessary because of the many erroneous opinions and doctrines, which had begun to manifest themselves even in those days of the infancy of the Church, and during the lives of the Saviour’s immediate successors and ministers, amongst Christians, both of Gentiles and of Jews. As the latter belonged more peculiarly to the episcopal superintendence of James, the Bishop of the Church at Jerusalem, which may be considered as the metropolitan or mother-church of all others, consisting as it did principally of Hebrew converts, it became essentially his duty to warn them against the prevailing errors. Hence his Catholic or General Epistle, written to put them on their guard against the rising heresies of the day, and more especially to give them right opinions in respect of the doctrine of Justification, which the weak and unstable, from a wrong interpretation of St. Paul’s statement of it, had wrested into a cloak of licentiousness and a pretext for the neglect of all moral and social obligations. Hence the earnest exhortations contained in this epistle to the performance of various duties, illustrated by an appeal to the examples of obedience, suffering, patience, and prayer, exhibited in the conduct of Abraham, Rahab, the Prophets, and Elias.

The abruptness of the conclusion of this epistle is accounted for by the supposed circumstance of the writer's sudden death; for James was cut off in a sudden persecution by his countrymen during a short interregnum between the death of Festus, the Roman procurator, and the arrival of his successor Albinus, when the absence of a Roman governor afforded an opportunity to the Jews to gratify their lawless and cruel passions in respect of the sect of the Nazarenes, as they contemptuously termed the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. The Epistle of St. James the Less has been rightly considered as forming a kind of connecting link between Judaism and Christianity, as the ministry of John the Baptist was between the Old and the New Covenants—between the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was written A.D. 62.

CHAPTER XX.

A.D. 63-66.

ACTS XXVIII. 30, 31.

St. Paul's Deliverance from Rome.—Luke writes the Gospel which bears his Name, and the Acts of the Apostles.—The Epistle to the Hebrews.—St. Paul visits Spain and Britain.—Returns to Jerusalem for the last time.—Visits various Churches on his way to Rome.—His Martyrdom.

AFTER being detained two years at Rome in honourable captivity—honourable as far as having the liberty to reside in his own hired house, but captivity as being all the time bound by a fetter round his arm to a Roman soldier, in whose custody he was kept, St. Paul received his order of deliverance. His accusers in Jerusalem and Cæsarea did not follow him to the Imperial City. He was released, therefore, without trial, probably in consequence of the death, about this time, of Festus, by whom he had been sent from Judea, as a state-prisoner reserved for a personal hearing before the Emperor Nero.

After his liberation, Luke “the beloved physician,” who had remained with him through evil

report and good report, companion of his travels, sharer of his dangers by land and by sea, and who accompanied him of his own accord in his captivity both at Cæsarea and Rome, for a space of not less than five years, is supposed to have left him. So long an intimacy with the Apostle had peculiarly fitted him, as well from talents as experience, to give an account of the things of which he had been "an eye-witness," both during the life and preaching of his Great Master, and the various events and circumstances which attended the exertions of his Apostles to fulfil the commission with which He had invested them—"to preach the Gospel to every creature."

There had already been published two narratives of the Life of Jesus Christ ; one, the Gospel written by St. Matthew for the use of the Christian Jews in their dispersion, during the first persecution of the infant church, when Stephen was martyred and Saul was busy in the work of slaughter (A.D. 34); the other, the Gospel of St. Mark, written under the direction of St. Peter during the second or Herodian persecution, after the calling and conversion of the proselytes of the gate. (A.D. 44). Since that period another and very numerous class of persons had been admitted into the fellowship of the Gospel, for whose particular use no narrative of the actions and teaching of

their Universal Head had yet been compiled. It became, therefore, a very probable circumstance that he, who had been so mainly instrumental in calling this third class of converts from darkness to light, should employ part of the leisure which his detention at Rome afforded him in making necessary arrangements to meet this deficiency. The companionship of St. Luke, whose talents and education fitted him for such a work, supplied him with the means of doing so.

It is universally agreed that Luke was a physician, but whether a Jew or Gentile there is not the same agreement. The greater probability is that he was a Jew, one of the seventy, and “the other disciple” who was with Cleopas when the risen Saviour appeared to them on their way to Emmaus. His name as Lucius and Luke appears in the Epistle to the Romans, from which we learn he was of the same family as St. Paul. He was also one of the prophets and teachers at Antioch, who were fasting and ministering unto the Lord, when Paul and Barnabas were separated, by the monition of the Holy Ghost, for the work unto which they were then apostolically ordained. His residence with St. Paul during his two long imprisonments, and his travels with him through Macedonia and Asia to Jerusalem, and in his voyage from Cæsarea to Rome, have been already

noticed. They are now referred to as evidences to shew his fitness, as the scribe or secretary of St. Paul, for the work which he now undertook—the work of supplying to the Gentile converts first an authenticated account of the actions and teaching of Jesus Christ, and then a narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, and especially of him who was the Apostle of the Gentiles.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE and the ACTS OF THE APOSTLES were written by Luke, probably under the superintendence and direction of St. Paul at Rome, and completed and published by him somewhere in Greece after he had separated from the Apostle, now liberated from his bonds, and although not exactly contemporaneous, may be considered as having been sent forth very soon after one another. (A.D. 63.)

In the same year was written the EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS. Whilst sojourning in Italy after his liberation, waiting for the return of Timothy, whom, according to his promise the year preceding, in his Epistle to the Philippians, he had sent to them “to know their state,” St. Paul wrote that, perhaps the most important, as it was the last, of his Ecclesiastical Epistles.

The unconverted Jews, to persecutions and revilings added the most cogent and plausible arguments to turn away believers from the faith, by

referring to their Scriptures, which Christians were taught to reverence and accept as the Word of God equally with themselves, and by proving out of them the superiority of Moses, the distinguished Giver of the Law, over Christ, the lowly Galilean, the outcast of men, condemned alike by Jew and Gentile to the ignominious death of the cross. They could refer also to their Temple and all its train of public worship, sanctioned as it had been by authority from Jehovah ; and they could point also to the establishment of their priesthood, clearly defined and divinely organized. They could boldly challenge Christian professors to bring forward any part of their polity which could stand the test of comparison with theirs. With such arguments, backed by their Doctors and Scribes learned in the law, they prevailed over the weak minds of some, causing them to draw back from the faith, and forsake the assembling of themselves together with the brethren, as they had before done.

To confirm the faith of the believers and counteract the pernicious reasonings, as well as gain-say and refute the false principles, of the Jewish teachers, St. Paul, not inferior to any of their doctors or most learned men, as the scholar of Gamaliel and the servant and Apostle of Jesus Christ, wrote an epistle to his countrymen. For

although especially appointed to call the Gentiles from darkness to light, and superintend and direct them in their Christian course, yet as St. James, the head of the Jewish converts, had been slain, as we have stated, in a tumult of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in the interval between the death of Festus and his successor Albinus, he now thought fit to address to the Hebrews an exposition of their law and ceremonies in reference to their connexion with Christ, his attributes, sacrifice, and triumph: knowing that his name would serve to excite a prejudice against its general acceptance, he did not use the same superscription to them as he had done in his former letters to his own converts, or the churches established amongst the Gentiles. But the depth of his knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures and Jewish Theology, and the fervour of his zeal in vindication of the office and nature of the Head of the Christian Church, are not less conspicuous on this account.

The leading object of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, was to establish the superiority of Jesus Christ over angels, to whom the Jews ascribed the dispensation of their Covenant; and over Moses the Law-Giver, and Aaron their first Great High-priest; because the establishing of this superiority would carry with it that of all

details in connexion with his Gospel, the New Testament, the covenant of grace, the ratification of peace between God and man. This object he carries out in the most masterly manner, proving to the Jews out of their own Scriptures, in a way peculiar to himself and worthy of the sublime argument he had undertaken, that the Creator of all things was Jesus Christ ; therefore he was superior to angels, who were his ministers : that the Builder of the House of God, which was the Church of Israel of old, was Jesus Christ ; therefore he was superior to the overseers of that house, Moses and Aaron : whilst his Priesthood was worthy of much more honour than that of the Levitical succession, as the thing signified excels its type, substance its shadow, perfection imperfection, and that which continueth for ever, unchanged, is to be prized above every thing, however excellent, which is limited in duration, and fashioned with the view of being one day abrogated and changed. From the fact of this superiority of Jesus Christ in all things came the abrogation of the Jewish Ritual, and the establishment and obligation of the Christian Faith with all its spiritual observances.

The Epistle to the Hebrews may be looked upon as the key of the Old Testament, unlocking mysteries, and types, and prophecies, the understand-

ing of which had been hitherto shut up ; and shewing them, together with sacrifices and bloody offerings, to have been but shadows of that one Great Sacrifice and Oblation paid once for all by Jesus Christ, as the only and complete atonement for sin, and price of man's redemption and reconciliation to God. In no part of the Holy Volume is the doctrine of the Atonement so clearly stated, or so irrefragably proved : and were all other parts of Scripture lost, this one epistle would still serve to shew the real character and defect of the First Law or Covenant of Works, and the true nature and perfection of the New Law or Testament of Grace. Written thus to refute the false doctrines of Jewish teachers, the greater portion of it is devoted to that one object ; but it displays also the greatest incentives to holy living, by appeals to the examples of Jewish worthies and by earnest exhortations to unity and brotherly love.

The inspired writings do not afford us any further explicit account of the actions of the Apostles. We are, therefore, reduced to the necessity, in a great measure, of depending upon the histories of others, and deriving from them information to fill up the period over which the remaining Canonical Epistles and the Book of Revelation extend. When that information does not militate

against, but coincides with, allusions contained in those Epistles, it merits our credence. From these unauthenticated sources we draw conclusions in respect of historical incidents, which stand upon the same evidences, and deserve our acceptance as firmly as facts, recorded by authors in respect of ordinary and more common events.

St. Paul was liberated from his confinement at Rome at the end of the year 62, or early in the following year (A.D. 63). Here the inspired narrative of St. Luke ends. The Gospel had well-nigh been preached to every creature. Almost every part of the known world had been visited by the Apostles, and facilities had been afforded to some of the inhabitants of every nation under heaven to hear and know the message of Glad Tidings. The principal portions of the East had been traversed again and again. The dogmatism of the Jews, the sophistry of the Greeks, had been brought into collision, and failed before the word of Grace and Truth. The barbarous and desert regions of Illyria had been visited with the manifestations of Almighty power, and had echoed to the sound of the voice of Christ's ministers publishing pardon and peace through his blood. And last of all, the seat of universal empire, the resort of persons from every region, had not only heard and received the word, but had retained

within its walls one who, though a prisoner, had carried the name of Christ even into the chamber of the Emperor. After his release, facilities of passing into a part of the world which he had not yet visited presented themselves.

At this period the success of the Roman arms had opened an easy passage through Gaul into Spain and the islands of the West. The defeat of the Britons under Boadicea, about the time of the Apostle's coming to Rome, had necessarily caused an influx of British captives into that city, and increased the number of those who had accompanied the noble Caractacus about fourteen years before. It is evident, therefore, that there must have been in Rome, during St. Paul's detention, some of the natives of Britain. Many of these were brought out as gladiators in the public games; condemned not only to fight one against another, but even to encounter the savage fury of wild beasts. Others were kept in bondage; and a similarity of condition might, therefore, excite a mutual sympathy and correspondence between the British war captives and the Jewish prisoner. If, too, as some have supposed, the Apostle was himself reduced to the risk of fighting with wild beasts, from which he was providentially delivered, his deliverance would naturally excite the atten-

tion of others, placed in a situation resembling his own.

It is not, therefore, any great stretch of imagination to conjecture, that having been brought into contact and intercourse with some of the natives of Britain, he might be roused from that circumstance to form a plan, after his release, to visit that country. Nor is this a vague conjecture. He had intimated in his Epistle to the Romans (A.D. 58) his intention to visit Spain, and had expressed his anticipation of being assisted in that intention by them. What more favourable opportunity could he have, than his being at Rome among the very persons to whom he had previously intimated his intention, and from whom he had anticipated assistance! To have returned directly to Judea would have been like rashly and unnecessarily rushing upon danger. He had communicated by letters and messengers with the other churches, and nothing in them appeared seriously to demand his presence.

There is, therefore, every probability of St. Paul's having employed the two years following his release from Rome in visiting various parts of Italy, Spain, and the islands of the West. But this strong probability becomes a confirmed fact, if we may give the usual credit which is attached

to histories in general, to the statements of Clement, St. Paul's "own intimate friend and fellow-labourer," and afterwards Bishop of Rome in the first century ; to Irenæus, disciple of St. John, in the second century ; and in the four next succeeding centuries to Tertullian, Jerome, Theodoret, and others, whose united evidence, supported by more recent testimonies, appears to place beyond reasonable doubt the fact that the Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, preached the Gospel in Britain, the island of the West, the furthest boundary of the earth. This event, thus considered, must have taken place A.D. 63 or 64.

On his return from this visit to Spain and Britain, it is probable that he returned to Jerusalem. For as, upon his deliverance at Corinth, he proceeded to the city of his forefathers, to offer his thanks in the Temple ; so now, having been rescued from the perils which awaited his voyage to Rome, and during his confinement there, and having been enabled to extend the knowledge of that grace, which had appeared unto all men, by preaching the Gospel where the name of Christ had not before been heard, he would be anxious, according to his former custom, to "pay his vows in the courts of the Lord's house, even in the midst of Jerusalem." It would be his last visit to the city of the Lord. The signs of the times gave

him sufficient assurance that the end of all things, as connected with that devoted city, and his own nation, was at hand. He alludes to this awful fact in some of his Epistles. The predictions of his Divine Master fully pointed to the approaching desolation. Once more, therefore, to visit the Temple, and weep as his Master had done, over the anticipated woes and miseries laid up in store, and ready to be sent forth as a deluge unsparing upon those who had not spared others, would naturally form one of the dearest and most cherished objects of the Apostle's wishes and desires.

Nor would his presence now be so likely to excite persecution as in former times. The heads of the Jewish nation, who had before pursued him with rancorous malice, were now engrossed with their own views of public turbulence; hatred towards their conquerors had become their absorbing passion. Already the fire was kindled, which in a very few years subsequent to these events consumed and laid waste both the city of Jerusalem and the country of Judea. Already, for two years, had been heard the warning and awful cry of Jesus the son of Ananus, "A voice from the East! a voice against Jerusalem and the Temple!" That cry was but an echo of the feelings and sentiments of the Apostle himself, and

must have sunk upon his heart with a deep and solemn interest. It would serve to shew him also, that in Jerusalem was no place of tarrying—it was no abiding city for himself and fellow-Christians. Their Master had told them to flee out of the city, and trust not in its outward defences or the zealous courage of its inhabitants. All his followers, therefore, who believed his words observed the signs predicted, and like Lot from Sodom escaped for their lives before the fiery indignation fell upon the devoted city, and found a Zoar everywhere, because “the Lord of Hosts was with them, the God of Jacob was their defence.”

Antioch was to the Apostle in reference to the Gentiles, what Jerusalem was in reference to the ministration of the Gospel among the Jews. Having, therefore, paid his visit to the metropolis of the latter, it is conjectured that he next proceeded to Antioch, which he had not visited since the year A.D. 55. He had promised Philemon (A.D. 62) that he would visit the Colossians, and had directed him to prepare a lodging. From Antioch the Apostle probably proceeded, in consequence of that intimation, to Colosse. He had also intimated to the Philippians his hope of coming amongst them, and “abiding and continuing with them for their furtherance of joy and faith.” (Philippians i. 25.) Philippi would,

therefore, form another object of his route. We read (2 Timothy, iv. 20) that he left Erastus at Corinth, which he could not have done previous to this journey. The presumption, therefore, is, that from Philippi in Macedonia he went to Corinth, to visit his converts there, whom he had not seen for six years. We next trace him at Troas (2 Timothy, iv. 13), where he left his cloak and parchments. At this place he had (A.D. 58) preached with great earnestness, and wrought a miracle upon the lifeless body of Eutychus, who had fallen from a window, overcome by sleep, during the Apostle's long address.

We next find St. Paul (2 Tim. iv. 20) at Miletus, where he left Trophimus, who had been his companion, sick. Miletus was a celebrated port in Caria, conveniently situated for traffic, both to the opposite continents of Greece and all places lying in connexion with the Mediterranean Sea. Miletus was deeply involved in the various events of Ionian warfare; and though it sent out various colonies, it has now neither name nor place. His former departure from Miletus (A.D. 58) will be remembered as having been rendered remarkable by the display of the most affectionate kindness of his friends, forming the beginning of that sunshine of sympathy and devoted attachment which followed him from that place to Jeru-

salem. On that occasion he was journeying towards the city of his fathers, where bonds and imprisonment awaited him. Now he was on his way to Rome, to seal, with his latest breath, the testimony of Him whose minister and devoted servant he was.

On his arrival at Rome he found a great change since his departure three years before. The vicious principles of the Emperor Nero had rapidly developed themselves in a progress of enormities, debasing to human nature, whilst the rabid representations of the Jews had prevailed to render the name of Christians obnoxious to the state. The city had been set on fire, as it is supposed, by the Emperor himself; and the blame of such a flagitious crime was laid to the charge of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, who were, therefore, now hunted from place to place with the bitterest enmity, and persecuted with unsparing cruelty. As a very leading character amongst them, St. Paul no sooner appeared at Rome than he was thrown into such close and secret confinement, that with difficulty Onesiphorus (2 Tim. i. 16), who before had ministered to him at Ephesus, where his family resided, found him out.

So fierce, indeed, was the persecution against him, and so great the danger which threatened not only him but all who belonged to the brother-

hood, that at his first answer, as he himself writes to Timothy (2nd, iv. 16), “no man stood with him, but all men forsook him.” With his usual ability he appears to have conducted and defended himself on this occasion, not only in reference to his own unimpeachable conduct, but to the purity of the faith for which he was content to suffer persecutions. The promise of the Divine Head of the Church was realized in his support, and for the promotion of His word; for “by him the preaching was so fully known, that all the Gentiles heard” the name of that Saviour, who, of the united race of Jew and Gentile, died alike for the circumcision and the uncircumcision. For the present, therefore, “he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion,” but whether literally or metaphorically is not known.

Little more is known from any of the inspired writings respecting the remainder of his sojourn at Rome previous to his death, which event was now approaching. He had undergone almost every kind of privation and suffering in testimony of his sincerity in the way of the Gospel. He, who once persecuted others with unsparing fury, had been from the very outset of his Christian career to its final close, himself an object of the most bitter and unceasing persecution—first, by his own countrymen, and then, when they had lost the power,

by the Gentiles also, in whose behalf he had traversed so large a space of the habitable globe. But before his death one other memorial of his affectionate earnestness for the Church and his beloved friends was sent forth, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, from which we have gathered many of the facts relative to the conclusion of his apostolical career.

The Second Epistle to Timothy was the last, the only consolation he could now give to his beloved son, and through him to the brotherhood. He was now almost alone; for only Luke was with him, who, after a separation of some time, had again rejoined him. Demas had, under trying circumstances, abjured the faith which he once professed, and for which he had been commended and associated with the believers—and forsaken him and gone into Thessalonica; whilst the rest of the brethren had severally returned to their respective charges: Crescens to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. But no desertion of false friends, nor absence of true ones; no loneliness of prison, nor threatenings of torments, could awe his spirit or abate his trust in God. He saw the blow which was about to descend. He saw it, unmoved, as the rock which dashes back the swelling surge. The closer danger pressed, the more sublimely rose his con-

fidence. He had before expressed the necessity of watchfulness, lest after all he should be a cast-away, and of pressing forward because the goal was not yet attained. Now, his soul exults in triumph. The testimony of "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man," shed before him the sunshine of unclouded hope, swallowed up in the instant realization of victory.

His had been a life of active zeal: the setting of his days was one magnificent blaze of glorious splendour; "he had fought the good fight,"—his course was well-nigh run, "he had kept the faith." Henceforth the prospect before him was the possession of the Crown of Righteousness, stored up for him in the day when he should be offered as a victim on the altar, the time of which was now at hand.

The Second Epistle to Timothy contains St. Paul's dying blessing, and shews his unabated love both for him and the Church of God. It displays a beautiful and an affectionate exhortation to his dearly-beloved son, that he would remain faithful to his holy calling, both as an individual Christian and a bishop of the Church (which office he was to commit to others, also,) under all difficulties of trials and opposition, apostacy, dissension, and persecution. His last recorded words—which were not only a dying

blessing to him and to the brotherhood, but a plain recognition of the Godhead of Him who had called him, and snatched him as a brand from the fire—are, “The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.”

It is asserted by some that St. Paul suffered martyrdom by having his head cut off with a sword, the punishment of free-born Romans; whilst others state that he was exposed to wild beasts, a mode of execution practised by his persecutors upon the defenceless Christians, on the 29th of June, A.D. 66.

CHAPTER XXI.

A.D. 66-96.

St. Peter.—His Two General Epistles.—His Martyrdom.—
St. Jude.—His Epistle.—Destruction of Jerusalem.—St.
John the Divine.—The Apocalypse or Revelation.—His
Three Epistles.—His Gospel.

WE have seen St. Paul finishing his ministerial race of usefulness, and sealing the testimony of his apostleship with the blood of martyrdom, A.D. 66. Nor was his the only blood of Christian worthies poured forth that year, during the general persecution of Nero; for that noble pillar of the truth as it is in Jesus, Peter the Galilean, the zealous, ardent fisher of men, was this year prostrated by the blow of death. He and his active coadjutor in the work of evangelising the world were cut off in the same year; and both of them, as martyrs, at Rome. But as the one before his departure bequeathed a monument of his faith and love and obedience to his son Timothy, for the benefit of the whole Church; so did the other finish his sphere of evangelical usefulness by leaving two records of the doctrine he had received from his Divine

Master, and of his own affection towards his fellow-Christians.

The two General Epistles of St. Peter were written from Rome, very soon after one another. Their object, taken from the fiery circumstances of the times, was to impart consolation and encouragement to those who were suffering under the persecution of the bloody Nero. Already St. Paul had been shut up, and suffered martyrdom in that persecution; and St. Peter himself was now in bonds, waiting for the fulfilment of that prediction of his Divine Master given by the lake of Gennesareth, when the restitution of the fallen Apostle to his pastoral office was blended with an allusion to the death, with which he should hereafter terminate his life of activity in propagating the message of glad tidings.

Rightly interpreting the signs of the times spoken of by his Divine Master, when he depicted the misery and desolation which would one day fall upon Jerusalem, and being conscious of his own approaching end, the zealous Apostle was not unmindful of the sheep and lambs whom he had been appointed to feed. Accordingly, when he could no longer be present with them, like his fellow-labourer the Apostle of the Gentiles, who had already passed to the home of blessedness through the bloody gate of martyrdom, he de-

voted his remaining days to the execution of those epistles or letters which bear his name.

The First Epistle of St. Peter was addressed to “the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” In it he endeavours to fortify their minds and hearts under the pressure of manifold temptations by the encouraging nature of their Christian warfare, the reward of which is not of earth but of heaven ; and as a proof of their sincerity in this spiritual contest, he calls upon them to perform all their relative duties of citizens, masters, servants, husbands, and parents, by cultivating unity and peace among themselves, and patiently submitting to injuries and sufferings by the example of Christ Jesus, who “suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God.” Warning them of the approaching end of all things, he points out the necessary duties of prayer and watchfulness, and the faithful discharge of all duties, whether as elders or bishops, or as inferior officers in the Church, together with that steadfastness in the way of well-doing which would be attended with present support, and rewarded with future glories.

This First Epistle was soon followed by another, in which the Apostle devotes his powerful advice to the correction of sundry errors in doctrine

brought in by the Manicheans and Gnostics, some of whose expressions he uses against themselves, with an asperity consonant with his zeal, which neither age nor imprisonment could quench, when called forth in vindicating the truth and purity of that Gospel which for so many years he had so steadfastly and powerfully advocated and taught. Reminding his fellow-Christians of the necessity of going on to the accumulation of virtue upon virtue, he cautions them against the danger of incurring the punishment due to apostates, by reference to the fallen angels, the old world, the cities of the plain, and Balaam. As his dying bequest he exhorts them to look forward beyond this vale of trial to the acquisition of that state of blessedness "wherein dwelleth righteousness." He confirms also the authority of the Epistles of his "beloved brother Paul;" and again cautioning the brethren against being led away with the error of the wicked, he calls upon them to "grow in grace."

In such a manner did St. Peter close his preaching and teaching; above all, affording encouragement by his unswerving maintenance of what he taught in his own conduct and steadfastness. He had actively fulfilled his ministerial office. Whilst at large, he had never slackened his zeal in going about preaching, and confirming the churches; when shut up he remembered his charge, and

was no less urgent in comforting, exhorting, warning, and admonishing them according to their difficulties, dangers, and errors. Nor was his end unbecoming the tenor of his whole life. The fisherman of Galilee, the follower of Jesus of Nazareth, the Apostle of the risen Saviour, the martyr of the glorious Gospel, was evermore the warm, the active, the unwearied, the unflinching character ; not without faults, but abounding with a fervid zeal, which urged him to activity in every enterprise — an activity which ceased only with life.

That life was brought to a close in the Neronian persecution A.D. 66, the same year (and, as some imagine, the same day,) in which Paul of Tarsus suffered martyrdom. Their manner of execution was in conformity with their several stations. One, as a citizen of Rome, was beheaded ; the other suffered death as a common malefactor on the cross, as did his Divine Master, but at his own request with his head downward, because he deemed himself unworthy, even in that disgraceful mode of punishment, to be on an equality with Him.

Thus, in one and the same year, two of the noblest pillars of the Christian Church fell. Greatly must their loss have been felt by all the churches ; for that was no time of safety or quiet-

ness. Many of their members had blasphemed. False doctrines were amongst them. There were wars without, strivings within. Persecutions assailed all. Errors perverted some. Nothing but Truth, assisted by the agency of the Holy Spirit, could have survived the conflict, or animated to steadfastness the followers of a crucified Master, maligned, buffeted, betrayed, given over to imprisonment, and deaths the most painful, and cruelties most elaborately refined. At such a time to have lost the superintending guidance and example of two such teachers and leaders as St. Paul and St. Peter, was indeed a powerful blow, which gave their enemies cause to triumph, and afforded occasion of sorrowing and despondency to the faithful.

The dangers which hedged in the Christian Church on every side from false teachers, are evinced in the last Epistles of St. Paul, and in a short but expressive one, written A.D. 66, by Jude. The latter Apostle, known also by the names of Lebbeus and Thaddeus, was brother of James the Less, bishop of Jerusalem, and a near kinsman of our Lord. He was one of the Twelve, of whose history little is recorded in the sacred canon. From other sources we are led to infer that he was a tiller of the ground, a married man with a

family, and that he was sent on an evangelical mission to the city of Edessa, to Agbarus king of Osroene.

Instructed in the faith, and commissioned to the work of an Apostle by the same Divine Master who gave authority to the Twelve to preach the Gospel, the Epistle of St. Jude, addressed to the Christian professors in the year A.D. 66, that period of persecution, false doctrine, and bitter trials, has equal force and authority with the writings of the other Apostles. It was sent forth as a brief but energetic warning against the prevailing errors of the day; those false doctrines which St. Peter had so sharply reproved in his Second Epistle, to which it bears a striking resemblance both in spirit and expressions. In it the faithful are exhorted to steadfastness, and warned against falling away, by examples taken from the Old Testament, and by references to the written expositions of the other Apostles of Jesus Christ, which foretold and denounced the practices of false teachers.

The General Epistle of St. Jude was the last warning voice of the Holy Spirit before the destruction of Jerusalem. That day was now drawing on. The principal immediate followers of Christ had been taken from this stage of exist-

ence. It had been foretold that not one of them should survive that tremendous event. The Canon of Scripture, therefore, was now well-nigh completed. And as the death of Moses was a manifest token of the near approach of the entrance of their forefathers into the land of promise ; so now the death of the chosen Apostles, in various places, became a sign that the day of the desolation of that land and the complete rejection of Israel was at hand: other signs, which were precursors of that day, had been progressing with such marked precision, that they could read who ran.

Four years after the martyrdom of St. Paul and St. Peter (A.D. 70) Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple laid waste and ploughed up, and the Jews themselves ceased to be reckoned, although mixed up everywhere, amongst the nations of the earth. Every minute particle of Scripture prophecy had been fulfilled ; affording as well an evidence of the immutable truth of God's word, as a striking proof that no one, whether nations, or individuals, or churches, can set themselves up against the Divine Power, or wilfully despise the Divine Command, but to their certain destruction.

One Apostle, and he the beloved Disciple of our Lord, survived the annihilation of the Jewish state. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, had fallen a

victim to the pitiless vengeance of the Jews ; Peter and Paul had perished in the bloody persecution of the tyrant Nero ; Timothy, Dionysius the Areopagite, and the most illustrious of the first-fruits of their ministration, had also been carried off in the Domitian persecution ; St. John alone remained ; and to him was left the office of perfecting the Scripture Canon of the New Testament. When he had completed this he died, not less than one hundred years old, as it is generally believed, a natural death at Ephesus, in the early part of the reign of the Emperor Trajan. As he had lived in the exercise of love and gentleness in every state of his protracted life, so did he sink into the grave serenely and placidly, exchanging his earthly usefulness for heavenly glory, but not before he had left written memorials of his faith, love, and experience.

They who closely trace the gradual development of the scheme of Divine Mercy recorded in the Old Testament, become aware of the beautiful and regular economy by which that scheme was brought to perfection. The promise made to our guilty parents was less definite than the renewal of it to Abraham, in whose family it became limited. It was again made more plain when assigned to the tribe of Judah ; still plainer when defined to the race and family of David ; and il-

lustrated in different ways, with extended circumstances, by Isaiah and other Prophets, until Malachi proclaimed the period within which it should be accomplished.

Thus did the voice of Prophecy speak to them of old of the mystery of the Gospel, developing with broader and more discursive light the rising of the Day-Star on high, until the Sun of Righteousness burst forth in all the splendour and power of revealed godliness. There were also many other circumstances interwoven in these predictions, which have not even yet been realized, in reference to the chosen family of the Jews, but which will as certainly be fulfilled as any of those already accomplished. To their prophecies the Jews of old could appeal, as irrefragable proofs of the truth of their polity; for prophecy is continually an accumulating evidence. He who gave the Hebrews that evidence for their own comfort, and the refutation of their blasphemers, has not left the new dispensation of His grace without a similar evidence. The Apocalypse of St. John, promulged about the year 96, stands in the place of a continued succession of prophets in the Christian, such as were in the Jewish Church, until the second coming of Christ to judge the world. Ever the beloved Disciple of his Divine Master, and now venerable for years and sanctity, he was

divinely inspired to record a number of visions, in which the Almighty God revealed to him the various vicissitudes of the Church of Christ through periods of darkness, and superstition, and error, and persecution, to the consummation of all things, the day of the complete triumph of the power of godliness.

This revelation was made to the Evangelist in the island of Patmos, where he lived in exile, some time before the termination of the Domitian persecution. That revelation had for its object, as well to make known to him the then state of the Christian Churches in Asia, viz. “the things that are;” as to set before him “the things which shall be hereafter;” that is, “the constitution and fates of the Christian Church through its several periods of propagation, corruption, and amendment, from its beginning to its consummation in glory.” The publication of the Apocalypse was made soon after St. John’s return to Ephesus, the city of his pastoral charge, and from which he had been banished in the Domitian persecution to Patmos, where it was composed.

Previous to this, and subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem, he had planted the Churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Laodicea, Sardis, Philadelphia, Thyatira, and others in Asia Minor. To these seven Churches—alas, they are now but a name!—

he addressed the Revelation, and pointed out to them their several states or conditions, and afforded them instruction or warning suited to their infidelity, their lukewarmness, their declension in spirit, their trials and afflictions, and fitted to the circumstances of all churches and communities, when placed under the same relative conditions.

It was about this period, also, after his return to Ephesus, that St. John sent forth his First Epistle, which indicates the mild benevolence and meekness of one on whose bosom the head of the Saviour had been wont to recline, and in whose heart was cherished the true spirit of His own surpassing love. Since the destruction of Jerusalem and the death of so many active defenders of the truth, false teachers, anti-Christes, had sprung up and begun to abound. Amongst these were the Docetæ, persons who denied the Humanity of the Saviour, by affirming that he was but a kind of phantom, and not a real person. There were also the Cerinthians and Ebionites, who asserted on the other hand his absolute Humanity, but unconnected with the Divinity; whilst the Nicolaitans, or Gnostics, taught not only that knowledge was salvation, but that justification by faith superseded the necessity of personal holiness. These were the anti-Christes—these the great and prevailing errors of that day, against which the beloved Disciple was

called upon to warn the Churches of the true God, in his evangelical commentary upon them, and his delightful exposition of the Christian faith contained in his First Epistle.

In his First Epistle, St. John not only denounces error but sets forth truth ; not only cautions against false doctrine, but enforces the test of all profession, that which was bequeathed as his Master's dying and parting legacy—love, or Christian charity. His Second Epistle was written about the same time (A.D. 96), and addressed to a noble Christian lady and her children, to put them on their guard against the pernicious effects of false teachers, and to exhort them to walk after the commandment of mutual love and obedience. The Third Epistle of St. John was addressed to Gaius, supposed to have been a Gentile converted to the faith by the Apostle himself, and therefore not the same with any of those of that name mentioned in the Pauline writings. This Gaius was so eminent for his Christian hospitality that his charity was well reported of by all. He had given entertainment to some Christian preachers commended to him by the Apostle, who here praises his faithfulness, and prays that he may prosper in blessings both temporal and spiritual. Warning him of the presumption of Diotrephes, and commending unto him Demetrius, he con-

cludes by sending him his benediction and salutation.

We have now to notice but one other publication, to complete the sacred Canon of the New Testament, as we have received it. St. Matthew had written his Gospel Narrative during the Pauline persecution, for the use of the dispersed Christians, natives of Judea. St. Mark, under the direction of St. Peter, wrote his Gospel Narrative during the Herodian persecution, for the use of the converts of the gate. St. Luke, under the superintendence of St. Paul, published his Gospel Narrative, and the Acts of the Apostles soon after the first Neronian persecution, for the use of the Gentiles converted by that Apostle. Nearly forty years had elapsed since the last of these was sent forth. All had perished who had seen Christ in the flesh. Jerusalem had drunk the dregs of the fury of the Lord. False teachers had sprung up and sorely rent the Christian Church, whilst the persecution of heathen emperors had caused many to blaspheme, after having slain innumerable witnesses of the truth.

There wanted but one other publication, which, after reviewing the former Gospel Narratives, might supply their deficiencies, state facts to refute prevailing errors, and close the Holy Volume

with such evidences of experience and inspiration as might stand imperishable records of the truth of the Christian dispensation. The Gospel of St. John, sent forth in the same year as the Apocalypse and his Epistles (A.D. 96), almost seventy years after the crucifixion of his Divine Master, and just before the commencement of the Trajan persecution, realized all that was now needed, as well to establish the authority of former records as to confirm the Christian community, now made up without distinction into one body both of Jew and Gentile, with strength and principle equal to their approaching trials. St. John's former intimacy with the Saviour, his advanced years, his patriarchal experience, impressed an authority upon his Narrative of the actions and teachings of his Master, commensurate with its importance and befitting its dignity.

As the Canon of the Old Testament, therefore, was completed by Simon the Just, the last of the great Sanhedrim; so was the Canon of the New Testament completed by John the Beloved, the last of the evangelical conclave who beheld the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and whose commission, given to them by their Ascended Lord on Mount Olivet, they faithfully discharged "by preaching the Gospel to

every creature ;” “ going forth and teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ;” and “ being witnesses unto Him both in Jerusalem, and all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

THE END.

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A CATALOGUE OF NEW WORKS AND NEW EDITIONS

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